

Punch

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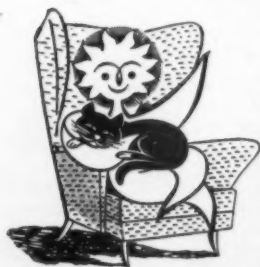


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CHARIVARIA

OBJECTIONS have been raised in South Shields to the appointment of the local police surgeon as a sub-postmaster. Students of hold-up figures say that at least it solves the old problem of what to do till the doctor comes.

THE Commonwealth Conference call for a telephone cable "to girdle the world" was generally acclaimed. Anything to put it in a better shape.

MANY *Daily Express* readers, offered a slimming diet for women with no will-power, were stung into mustering enough will-power to ignore it.

It was disappointing of Mr. Bevan, after being photographed at Scarborough in a beret, to make that impassioned appeal demanding a "*Oui, oui*," for Mr. Gaitskell.

MR. MACMILLAN's assertion that Britain's trumpet remains "remarkably unblown" provoked more than one



flagging Gaitskellite to mutter that, even more remarkably, so does Mr. Macmillan.

No lasting harm came to the Kendal schoolboys whose dinner was accidentally dosed with detergent, but they became noticeably whiter for a time.

It is proposed that barbers should take an examination before being allowed to practise. Subjects will include sport, politics, racing, and holding the mirror where it doesn't show the bald patch.

AFTER recent slurs on their honesty and efficiency, British police accepted as gracefully as possible the remarks of Alderman Chaffey of Birmingham,



speaking of the need to clean up Midland rivers: "Fish are the policemen of our rivers . . . when they disappear you know that there is pollution there."

AFTER reading front-page accounts of the Quemoy blockade *Daily Mail* readers found a nice bit inside for gastronomes, saying that "Nothing seems to stop the craze for Chinese food." Especially if you're Chinese.

STATISTICS are still coming in on how many bosses went to their secretary's room on "Secretary's Day" with a kind word, only to find they'd taken the day off to celebrate it.

RAILWAYMEN loading cereal packets at Stretford found a live 3.7 anti-aircraft shell in the wagon. They say this is taking give-away too far.

Second Thoughts on Quemoy

WHEN Dulles is wrapped in a great revelation

He'll commonly go to the brink in it;
But this time he finds that its basic foundation

Is flawed by the serious Chink in it.



Punch Diary

IT is quite astonishing how much hurried research a territory can cause journalists simply by voting "No" when wooed by General de Gaulle. I am ashamed of my ignorance of French Guinea but I can at least show off my new, and probably temporary, knowledge. The French claim that the Guinea coast was prospected by the men of Dieppe as early as the fourteenth century. In 1904 we cunningly swapped the Los islands as part of the deal over French fishing rights in Newfoundland, and now they are pouring out bauxite. There is more, and better, bauxite on the mainland, and this may have given a certain airiness to the local attitude towards French money. However, if they are going to process the stuff themselves they will need French help to complete the hydro-electric scheme that will work the plants. Gold and rubber are no longer the main crops. Orange essence, which they used to exchange for petroleum, and animal wax are all giving ground to heavy mining and industrial developments, which probably explains why Sekou Touré's Left-wing government has some hope of becoming a viable People's Democracy.

Is only Wee

THE exchange of letters about patronage between Lord Attlee and Mr. Grimond marks the end of the period when both major Parties treated the Liberals as pets. The Torrington by-election showed that the old chivalry—the man who would speak harshly to a Liberal is a man who would raise his hand to a woman—must go. What a shock the pretty dears must have had when, after their leader had flung a fearless, outspoken charge at other

politicians, he was asked for his proofs, just as though he had been a real grown-up leader. The pained surprise of Mr. Grimond's reply had all the terrible pathos of adolescence discovering the hardness of the adult world.

The Spirit of the Game

THE Football Association is on dangerous ground when it tries to stamp out "gamesmanship"—those democratic brains trusts that follow referees' decisions, the tripartite conferences with the linesmen that sometimes precede them, the ingenious artifices by which players can delay the progress of the game, the suffering bravely and publicly borne in the middle of the field, the unrestrained love-making after each goal, and so on. These are to a great extent what the public goes to see; if it were not, why should the big crowds always flock to games where such goings on are rife, while the comparatively clean and uneventful, though equally skilful, games between amateur clubs—not to mention the Rugby code—are by contrast neglected? The sooner the greater sporting public gets hold of the idea that professionals are simply paid entertainers, like circus clowns and Tommy Steele, the better chance there is that they may come to the conclusion that the proper way to participate in a game is to play it, not watch it.



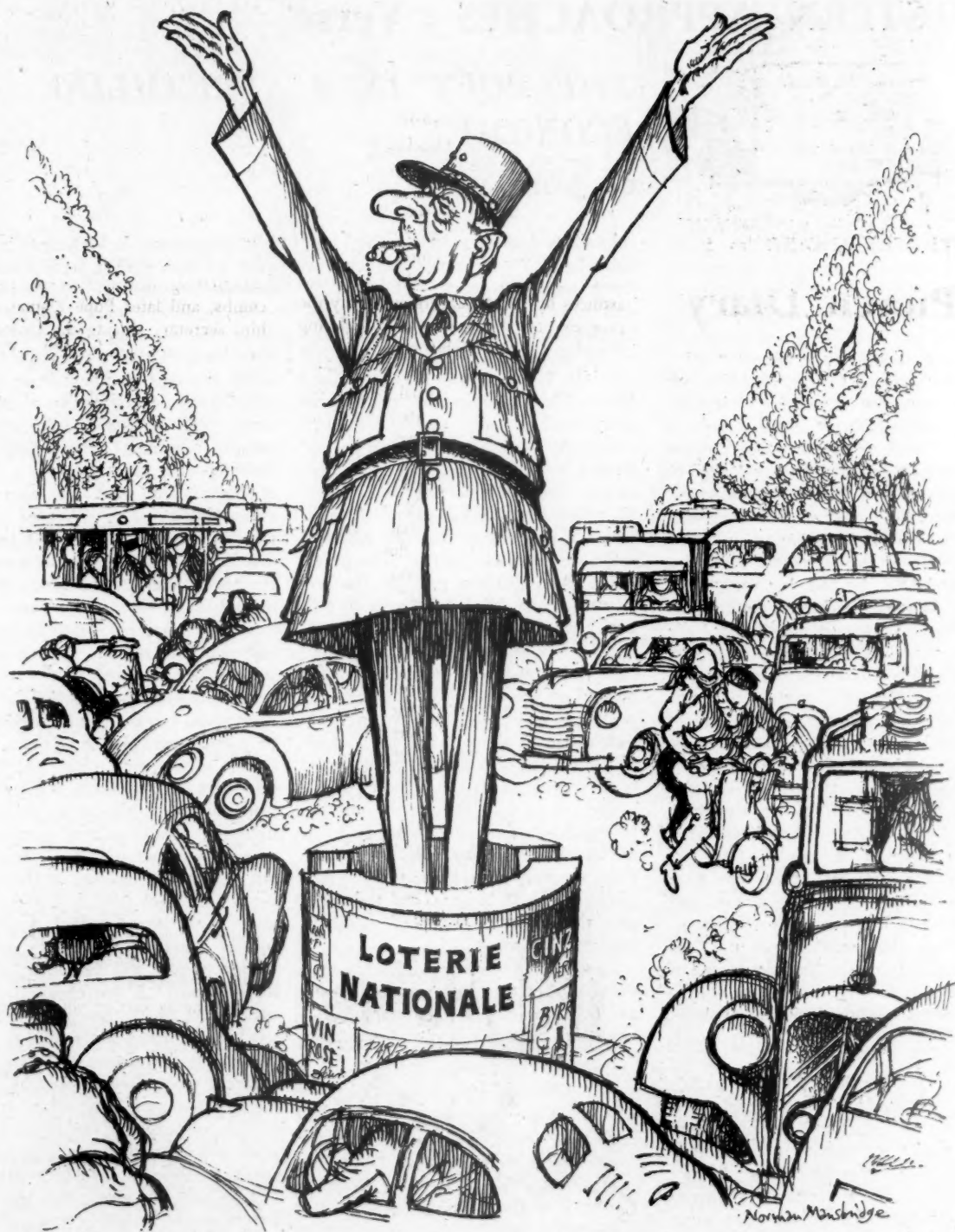
"A thousand and one problems. Designs for flags, stamps, coins, Parliament buildings..."

Secretary's Saint

IN fixing September 30 as "Secretary's Day" the founders of the feast seem to have builded better than they knew. They chose it simply because it was the birthday of the world's first secretary to use a typing machine, Lilian Sholes of Milwaukee, whose father invented the typewriter in 1873, since when the keyboard arrangement has scarcely been altered. But in the Church Calendar it is St. Jerome's Day; no better patron saint, for Jerome's Sundays in youth were spent deciphering inscriptions in the catacombs, and later Pope Damasus made him secretary during the investigation of a big rumpus at Antioch. He translated the Vulgate and is usually represented writing or studying. Miss Secretary 1958 may not have pondered much on the two items of her stock-in-trade and is unlikely to have read *Die Schreibmaschine*, a two-volume work on the apparatus, or *Characterie*, or *the Arte of Shorte, Swifte and Secrete Writing*, a sixteenth-century treatise on shorthand by Dr. Timothy Bright.

Blackboard Jungle

LAST week was Education Week. Two hundred Newcastle-upon-Tyne pupils chased their master through the streets until a greengrocer gave him sanctuary and he was rescued by three policemen. Mr. Gaitskell narrowly missed having his name struck from the roll of Winchester's distinguished alumni, and Mr. Cousins' was much pointed to on that of King Edward School, Doncaster. In Derbyshire, boys who had left school in the summer went back again, having found no jobs, and are in for rigorous cramming by their careers masters. Fifty schoolgirls paraded Bognor Regis with banners protesting against co-education, accompanied by one coerced boy. Sir John Glubb's son was sent down from Oxford for failing to shine in Philosophy, Politics and Economics—subjects in which Mr. Gaitskell achieved First Class honours thirty years before, a triumph which might or might not have been denied him if he had been at Mr. Cousins' school. Perhaps the brightest scholastic news was the announcement of new tranquillizers for classroom use, and if things go on like this they may spread up through staffs and faculties right to the Ministry.



Place de la V^e République

Aspects of modern thought and behaviour

WESTERN APPROACHES : Verse



THE POET IN A STREAMLINE ECONOMY

By JOHN WAIN

UNDERSTANDING as I do that this series is devoted to important topics, I propose to make some practical suggestions concerning two of the weightiest matters in any society: poetry and money.

Every human society of which we have record has accorded a high place to the poet, whether it regarded him as a sacred vessel of prophecy and inspiration, or as a verbal craftsman, skilled in the weaving of runes, incantations, memorable descriptions of public events and compliments to those in authority. The force of this ingrained sentiment of respect for the poet has never been better demonstrated than in the English-speaking countries during the last forty years; for who could have foretold that when people ceased to listen to the poets, when the populace, tutored and untutored alike, suddenly deserted them and made after fresh oracles, the years would tick by and find no dimming of the lustre that surrounds the name of poet? Yet this is what has happened. The bays have not withered, although the auditorium is empty. Various explanations have been given; some have blamed the poets, others the readers, and others again have come up with social-historical explanations that put the responsibility on the Zeitgeist in one of its many forms.

I am not concerned with the explanation. The fact is with us, and it is with the fact that I wish to deal. During forty years of neglect, the poet has lost none of his stature. There are still poets, lots of them: they give readings from their work, they publish volumes, they figure in bibliographies and literary handbooks. Their names are known to a surprisingly wide public—surprising, that is, in view of the extreme narrowness of the public that knows anything of them *but* their names. In the days when poetry had readers, people were

continually quoting snatches of it; "as Scott has it," they would say, or "as Byron sings." Nowadays there may be those who, in speech or print, are always happily divagating into "as Tiller has it" or "as Raine sings," but I doubt it; certainly I never meet or read them. Nor do I remember coming into a room unexpectedly and finding anyone reading a volume of contemporary poetry, or see people sitting in bars or railway compartments, head bowed over an irregularly printed page. And if personal impressions are not reliable, there are the trade figures. The poets write, the publishers publish, the reviewers review. But the buyers do not buy, and the readers do not read.

With any other kind of writing, the first three of those activities would depend on the last two: if buying and reading stopped, so would writing and publishing, let alone reviewing. But of course the whole point, the whole basis of the scheme I am about to put forward, is that poetry *is* different. Not only its procedures but its motives are such as are found nowhere else. The poets write from a variety of motives; there is the genuine impulse to song, and there are also the various shades of egotism, vanity and ambition.

Publishers' motives are simpler; a few volumes of poetry look nice on a list, and help to make, or maintain, a reputation for discrimination and unselfish

love of literature. In both cases, in short, there are both pure and mixed impulses at work, interested and disinterested.

My immediate point, however—for I do not wish to linger over complicated discussions of motive but to go straight to the practical, common-sense part of the business—is that we are witnessing, every year, a considerable waste of national resources. If you doubt this, consider what happens when a volume of poetry is published. The sequence of events begins with the poet looking through his manuscripts and realizing that he has enough to make a volume. He packs them up and sends them to his publisher, who in due course sends him a letter agreeing to publish the book and outlining terms. Now enter the compositors, the binders, the men who pack the books up into bales and drive them about in vans, the booksellers and their assistants; skilled workers, all of them, whose time and energy are important national assets. They do their work faithfully; the poet's manuscript becomes a book, printed on paper for whose manufacture living trees have felt the axe, transported at the cost of petrol for which Middle Eastern kingdoms have been invaded or cajoled, heaved about by the sinewy arms of workmen who will presently demand higher wages. A few copies reach the bookshops, where they lie for a season until remaindered and moved to a box outside in the street; after serving a sentence there, they are sold by weight to a wastepaper firm, taken away in lorries, and pulped. Now all this activity costs money, and money that we as a nation can ill spare; yet it benefits no one.

I suggest, therefore, that the booksellers should be left in peace; that the publisher, having accepted the poet's manuscript, and made the usual announcement of publication, should then compute what it would have cost him





"I'm told the food here isn't frightfully good."



to publish the book, write out a cheque for that amount, and hand it straight to the poet.

Stay, he should go to the bank and get the money in cash. I recommend crisp new pound notes, for the most part, but with a sprinkling of fivers, and even an occasional ten-shilling note for the sake of diversity. If the computed amount includes any odd shillings and pence, they should be put into a linen bag, neatly tied at the top. Armed with this, the publisher should then arrange to meet the poet at a good restaurant, stand him an ample lunch (the cost of which can be deducted from publication expenses), and, not too long after the beginning of the meal, hand him the money across the table.

The two advantages of this scheme are obvious. Costly materials and the valuable time of skilled workers are no longer being squandered on dummy activity; and the writing of poetry becomes lucrative. After all, at a modest estimate, it can hardly cost less than

£200 to bring out an adequately produced and distributed book; if this sum is handed straight to the poet, he rises at one move from the bottom of the payment scale to somewhere near the middle.

Now to meet any possible objections. I will begin by clearing away mere misunderstandings, and go on to meet more serious difficulties. To begin with, there may be those who will fear that the purity of the poetic life and temperament may be smirched by the introduction of adequate material reward. At the moment, so they probably feel, the poet writes for the sake of his art alone; pay him, and at once the field will be invaded by clever scribblers avid for easy money. This objection can best be answered by pointing out that, of the various oblique motives for which people write things, the hope of earning money is among the cleanest. If poetry really did become financially profitable to write it might attract a swarm of writers who saw themselves as nothing

more exalted than honest craftsmen, out to satisfy a market, like the writers of rhymes for Christmas cards; I cannot see that this would be much worse than the situation we have at present, when the poet's recompense is too often seen in terms of a Narcissistic vanity and the opportunity of self-advancement.

"But who would select the poets to be published?" The same people who select them now. Most publishers, knowing that it makes no difference whether they publish good poets or bad, nevertheless make (I am convinced) an honest effort to back their own individual judgment; the fashionable poet, like the fashionable anything, has a certain head-start, but it is not overwhelming; I see nothing here calling for reform.

"What will happen when the public learns of the deception?" There is no reason why the public should learn of it. In fact there is a very simple proof of the unlikelihood of detection. All you

have to do is to put yourself imaginatively in the place of this same public by applying the situation to some class of books which you yourself never read. Any example will do: explorers' stories, for instance. It so happens that I never read the memoirs of people who penetrate into Arctic wastes or tropical jungles. It is not that I have anything against such people or their books, but life is short, and it must be fifteen years since I read anything called *My Life with the Head-hunters* or *Yukon Fiesta*. Nevertheless, I know, or think I know, that such books have, during those fifteen years, been published in the usual steady flow. How do I know this? Because on opening the literary pages of newspapers I have seen the usual quota of space given to reviews of them. Not intending to read the books, and

therefore not needing the services of the reviewers, I have passed over the reviews unread; but I have seen that they were there. If there had been no reviews of books about head-hunters I, or someone else, would sooner or later have woken up to the fact. But as long as the reviews and the publishers' announcements kept their titles before me I assumed that the books existed.

Now, for all I know, it is possible that not one single volume about head-hunters has appeared since 1939. And there are numerous classes of books of which the same might be said. Memoirs of politicians, titled ladies, footballers. All books with titles like *The Iridescent Agate*. Anything about, or by, maggots. *How I Won the War with Churchill*. *Life with Pater*. *Hollyhocks*, *God Wot*.

That such books as these have

actually been written and published, I, and many other readers, have simply taken on trust. And why should we expect a higher level of vigilance, of suspicion even, among the very much larger body of readers whose attitude to poetry is the same as mine towards head-hunting?

By now the reader will ask what I propose to do about the reviewers. If a certain number of square inches of print are to be given to noticing volumes of poetry, who is to write these? And what will they be noticing?

Originally, I intended to cover this by ruling that the publisher should have two or three typewritten copies made from the poet's manuscript, to be handed round among the small circle who organize, and execute, poetry reviewing in this country. But on reflection I decided that even this would be a waste of time and material. It was not so much that the reviewer's time would be wasted; that, in most cases, will be wasted on one thing if not on another; but the time and wages of skilled typists or duplicator operators, and the cost of postage, would be excessive. Further, there would be an acute shortage of people to do the reviewing; most poetry reviewing is done by poets, as one of the perquisites of their office, and is seen mainly as a menial task, welcomed only because it is profitable. If poets received adequate payment for their poems they would not undertake reviewing. There are exceptions, true; some poets, usually those who have deep-seated doubts about their own imaginative potency, never miss a chance of reviewing other poets' work and saying something spiteful about it; but the existence of this fringe is an argument for, not against, a root-and-branch abandonment of reviewing.

No, the simplest solution, as usual, is the best. Let the literary editor, or his secretary, take a ruler and measure off the space to be filled; let him (or her) then take the same ruler to the files of the paper and measure off the same number of inches of poetry-reviewing from the back numbers. "But the titles will be different." Then alter them. "But the quotations will be different." No one will notice; but if you are afraid anyone might, let the office-boy, or anyone who happens to be handy, cross out the quotations and replace them



from a stock kept in readiness. "A stock of quotations?" No, stupid, a stock of *verse*; a few feet will suffice, if each review needs only a couple of inches. This stock of verse need only be such as will not be recognized; a few pages of *Hamlet* or *Paradise Lost* would be unsuitable. No, the best thing to do would be to assemble the verse-stock by purely mechanical, quantitative methods.

EXAMPLE:

*A bard is buried here, not strong, but sweet;
Beautiful habitations, auras of delight!
Cast wide the folding doorways of the East,
Dawn to dark!
Escape me?
Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat?
Go not, happy day:
He is the happy wanderer who goes!
I fear that Puck is dead—it is so long.*

If you read those lines in illustration of some reviewerly comment such as "Mr. Mumjoy has achieved a striking integration of image and symbol," would you feel any suspicion? Never, surely. And the little poem, so true to the Spirit of the Age (any Age), was composed by taking the *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, turning to the Index of First Lines, and copying down the first line listed under A, the second under B, the third under C, and so on to I. Only the punctuation remained for me to supply.

I trust I have now shown that by the adoption of this simple scheme, the profession, or condition, of being a poet may be made relatively lucrative as well as estimable; and that a small but persistent drain on the national economy may be avoided, with no loss of employment or leisure satisfaction. I have in fact already made some rough calculations which indicate that the money saved would be enough to float some small but necessary industry, such as the manufacture of rustic television aerials for thatched cottages.

Finally, I can announce that I hope very shortly to form a pressure-group as a first step towards getting the scheme adopted at effectively high levels. Only one precaution has still to be taken: I must gather up the literary pages of this week's papers and go along to a good bookshop. I suppose it's possible...

Next week: **DREW MIDDLETON**



Eat More Peat

By LORD KINROSS

WHEN the Americans, the good Samaritans of the nuclear age, brought aid to Ireland after the second world war their officials grew puzzled and pained by the apparent indifference of the Irish to the blessings of modern civilization. Scratching their heads to think of something for the Irish to export, with a view to balancing a precarious economy, they hit upon Irish whiskey, for which they had quickly acquired a taste.

"See here," they said to the Irish, "export more of your whiskey, and then you can import more automobiles and more refrigerators."

But the Irish failed to get the point of this. They would rather, they replied, drink more of their whiskey, and import no automobiles and no refrigerators at all. So the American officials went sadly away.

That was some ten years ago. Revisiting Ireland the other day I saw signs of an economy now grown so unbalanced that the poor Irish can no longer afford to drink all the whiskey they need. Scratching my own head, as I travelled, to think of some other commodity which they might export, and so remedy this deficiency, I reached

the bogs of County Donegal—and there hit upon the obvious solution. I hit upon peat; upon little else, in fact, on every hand, but peat. For Ireland is made of it.

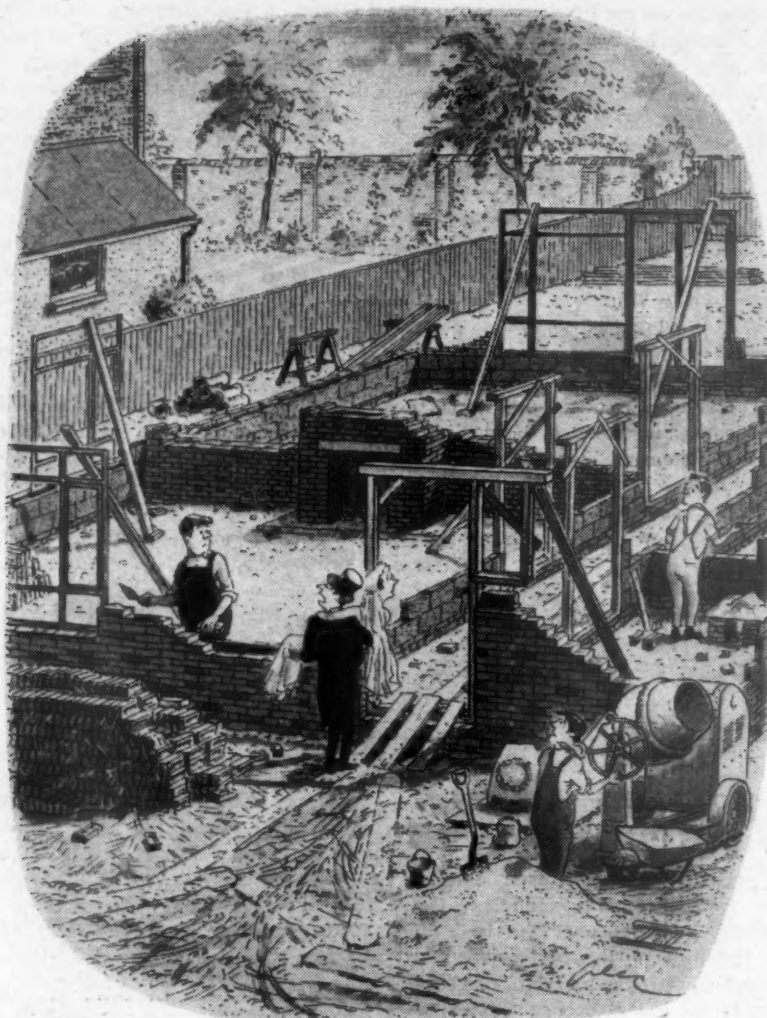
Now America, once New England and then New Holland, has been all the

THE NEW BOOK OF SNOBS

IN 1846 PUNCH began the publication of Thackeray's "Book of Snobs." Snobbery has gained a lot of ground since then, and in the issue of October 22 there will appear the first of a new series, "The New Book of Snobs."

Contributors to the series will include:

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE
SPIKE HUGHES
LORD KINROSS
THE REV. SIMON PHIPPS
E. S. TURNER
SIRIOL HUGH-JONES
JAMES LAVER
HENRY LONGHURST
ANN SCOTT-JAMES
STEPHEN POTTER
GEORGE SCHWARTZ
GWYN THOMAS
MACDONALD HASTINGS
PAUL REILLY



"Fetch me the blasted foreman!"

time, in a sense, New Ireland too. The Americans even speak with an Irish lilt to their accents, and use Irish phrases long since defunct in England. Why then, with the Samaritan goodwill which this affinity induces, should the Irish not be encouraged to convert Irish peat into American dollars and American dollars into Irish whiskey?

The Americans, far more than the English, are a conservative people, with a love of all that is sweetly old-fashioned. In their homes, for example, they display a love for the open fire-places of bygone days. A friend of mine once let his London house to some Americans, and the first thing they did was to

dismantle his elevator and unbrick his grates. In Texas one August, in a millionaire's mansion, I myself found a log-fire burning merrily on the hearth, nicely taking the chill off the air-conditioning.

In New England and in the millionaires' suburbs of New Jersey and Connecticut I always relished the oak-beamed barns gleaming with antique things—the horse brasses, the ships' lamps, the platters of pewter, the warming-pans of burnished copper, and above all the spits which turn over the wide open, ingle-nooked grates, filling the air with fragrant wood-smoke. Why not, I now asked myself, peat

smoke, wafted in waves of nostalgia from the Irish bogs?

For a start, I suggest to the Irish that they distribute, as sales samples, peat parcels, gratis, to every Westbound passenger leaving Shannon Airport. A demand for peat thus instantly created, they should start to convert their trawlers—for they hate sea-fishing anyway—into peat boats. Quite soon they will have a fleet of them, which should sail at regular intervals not to New York but to such Old New English ports as Bridgeport, Connecticut, Boston, Massachusetts, and Portland, Maine. The cost of transport will be high enough to put peat at a premium, thus ensuring a ready sale as soon as the excited cry goes round the suburbs and exurbs: "The Irish peat fleet's in!"

In no time, in all the richest houses, "Cook on Peat" will be the rule. Peat grills will replace charcoal grills. Peat barbecues, providing peat-flavoured steaks for the guests, will sweep fashionable America from coast to coast. Peatier Living will prevail ("It's more gracious, it's different"). It will be fun to go peaty. There will be Togetherness in an odour of peat smoke.

Peatwise, a new line of snobbery will slowly develop. Hostesses will come to pride themselves on their vintage peat. There will be good years and bad years, varying according to the Irish rainfall, and connoisseurs will learn to distinguish the subtle differences of bouquet between, say, a Connemara '58 and a Galway '52, matured in bins of Californian oak.

But peat is not only for burning. The Irish are famed for their imagination, and the free use of this, in close concert with the sales organizations of Madison Avenue, will confer upon it other properties as well. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "vegetable matter decomposed by water and partially carbonized by chemical change." It contains—or so says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen and an ash which incorporates ferric oxide, lime and magnesia. How much more medicinal can you get?

Thus Irish peat will surely come to be absorbed, internally, in a variety of pharmaceutical compounds, as a cure for rheumatic, diabetic, diuretic, abdominal, intestinal, pectoral and psychological ills. Its health-giving qualities

will be made appetizing to the American public in the form of peat extract for baby foods, shredded peat for breakfast foods, peat juice to counter acidity, compressed cubes for peat soup, Instant Peat, which tastes good, as a mouth-wash should, and a peat-mix for sauces and pies. The faint tang of the bogs will pervade the city as New Yorkers suck their peat tablets ("Peat sweetens the breath"), smoke their peat-flavoured tobacco ("It's Toasted"), drink their Bourbon with iced peat water (a rich golden brown), and munch their Peat-burgers at the drug store or the Chock Full o' Peats.

Nor, I imagine, will they be content with eating and drinking and dosing themselves with peat. They will be wearing it too. Does not the dictionary refer to peat wool ("wool impregnated with peat") and peat flannel ("with peat in its contexture")? Peat fabrics of all kinds will appear on the market. Virgin peat will come to rival cashmere and lamb's wool and vicuna for softness of texture. Luxury peatwear, appropriate to all kinds of weather, will breathe the essence of outdoor living.

The well-dressed man in the latest worsteds will smell ever so subtly of peat, wear peatskin gloves and a peats-wool pullover, use an after-shave peat lotion, blow his nose on peat-flavoured tissues, walk on peat matting and sleep on a peat-filled mattress in an apartment made soundproof by the new peat fibres.

But the Irish, thus sweetened to the uses of advertisement, will doubtless go further still than this. They will entice the inhabitants of New Ireland back to the peat bogs themselves, first equipping them as health-giving luxury spas. Shannon Airport will require to be extended, with a number of new runways, as the millionaires fly over each year for their peat cures, to soak in the peat-water baths of Connemara, to be encased in the peat-packs of Galway, to sweat out the acids, buried up to the neck in the carbonized, peat-heated bog-baths of Donegal.

And in the evenings, adhering to a strict régime before the peat fires in the pump rooms of their clinical hotels, they will be permitted to add to the waters of the peat wells just one tot of Irish whiskey. No more, for the Irish will be drinking the rest.

ШЕРЛОК ГОПМЕС,

the Immortal Sleuth of 221B Baku Street

By EVOE

TWO million roubles, I gather, are being claimed from Russian publishers for recent profits from the works of the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "the creator of Sherlock Holmes." So says *The Times*.

I don't know whether this would have astounded Dr. Watson. It astounds me. The Dreaming Musician, the Skilled Scientist, the Arch Investigator, in spite of some rather foolish statements made by his medical friend, was also a violent political propagandist, and his political studies wherever they led him were not scarlet in hue. Hear him in *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*:

"It is always a joy to me to meet an

American, Mr. Moulton, for I am one of those who believe that the folly of a monarch and the blundering of a Minister in far-gone years will not prevent our children from being some day citizens of the same world-wide country under a flag which shall be a quartering of the Union Jack with the Stars and Stripes."

I do not seem to hear this prophecy bubbling lightly from Nikita Khrushchev's lips, nor echoed by any member of the Soviet Præsidium. Even in the England of 1892, when it first appeared in print, it may have been a rather daring anticipation. But Lord Robert Walsingham de Vere St. Simon, formerly Under Secretary for the Colonies, had



"Aw, don't let's raid the place yet, sarge, the night's just a pup."

left the room when the words were spoken. He took no part in that supper of "cold woodcock, pheasant, *pâté de foie gras* pie with a group of ancient and cobwebby bottles" which graced the reunion of Hetty Doran and her transatlantic spouse. And the integration of the British Commonwealth with the United States of America still remains, curiously enough, unsummed.

*The stately Holmes of England
How beautiful he stands
The muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.*

I don't remember who wrote that, but a more endearing aspect of his character, in Russian eyes, may be his contempt for the British aristocracy. Lord St. Simon was the second son of the Duke of Balmoral ("Hum! Arms: Azure, three caltrops in chief over a fess sable"). He inherited Plantagenet blood by direct descent, and Tudor on the distaff side. ("Ha! Well, there is nothing very instructive in all this.") And in fact he is treated with ridicule throughout the whole story. It is my surmise that Lord Backwater was his elder brother, and it was Lord Backwater who, in *The Adventure of Silver Blaze*, employed as his trainer a man of whom Holmes remarked, as Watson and they trudged along together, "A more perfect compound of the bully, coward and sneak than Master Silas Brown I have seldom met with."

And what of the Beryl Coronet? Whose was "that name which is a household word all over the earth—one of the highest, noblest, most exalted names in England"? Who was it who placed in pawn "one of the most precious public possessions of the Empire" to satisfy an immediate financial need?

But these were mere domestic adventures. All round the globe ranged the political manoeuvres of the man who slew Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls. It was he who penetrated the colossal scandal of the Baron Maupertuis, in connection with the Netherland Sumatra Company. It was he who looked in at Mecca, visited Lhasa, and rendered assistance to the Khalifa of Khartoum. How does that fit in with the Party Line of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics? Most surely this man was a colonial meddler, a bloodthirsty agent of capitalist intrigues.

Finally, if you please, he was "summoned to Odessa to unravel the Trepoff Murder." What does your young

Ukrainian reader make of that, I should like to know? Not an atom secret would have baffled the great Western warmonger for longer than a pipeful of shag, nor is there any corner of Siberia that he would not with his microscope have explored.

None the less:

*The stately Holmes of England
How beautiful he stands
Beyond the Iron Curtain
In Byelorussian lands.*

And doubtless he will go farther still. Very likely before these words are printed *The Hound of the Baskervilles* will have become a text-book for students in Peking.

Better than War-War

A State Department spokesman said that the Warsaw talks between the American and Communist China Ambassadors were only being kept on because neither side wanted the onus of breaking them off

MR. BEAM: Good morning. Here we go again.

MR. WANG: That's right.

Both men arrange papers in a drawn-out manner.

MR. BEAM: I think you have my blotting-paper.

MR. WANG: I have?

MR. BEAM: Well, this is yours. It's got your drawing of Chiang. Remember we couldn't decide whether he had a moustache or not?

They exchange blotting-paper.

MR. WANG: When we had those talks two years ago they used to give us clean blotting-paper every day.

MR. BEAM (sighs): And better quality.

This Polish stuff won't take a likeness at all. Look at my Mao Tse-tung.

MR. WANG: I still say you haven't got his cap right.

MR. BEAM: What's the matter with it?

MR. WANG: You've put a button on top.

MR. BEAM: He has a button on top.

MR. WANG: No, pardon me.

MR. BEAM: Care to bet?

MR. WANG: You wouldn't bet yesterday about Chiang's moustache. Why should I bet about Mao's button?

MR. BEAM: O.K., O.K., but I just know I'm right, that's all. How are we doing? *[They consult their watches.]*

MR. WANG: Not bad. Five minutes gone already.

MR. BEAM: Five and a half.

MR. WANG: American watch. Always trying to get ahead.

MR. BEAM: *Touche.*

MR. WANG: *Mr. Wang drums his fingers and looks out of the Mysliwski Palace windows.*

MR. BEAM: *Mr. Beam takes a pill and taps himself gently on the breastbone.*



MR. BEAM (*presently*): Excuse me.
 MR. WANG: Of course.
 MR. BEAM: They're new. You can dissolve them in water, but it's quicker action this way.
They draw. Several minutes elapse.
 MR. WANG: Should we have the talk?
 MR. BEAM: No harm. Get it over with.
Both men lay down their pencils and sit more formally.
 MR. WANG: All right?
 MR. BEAM: O.K. [*A pause.*]
 MR. WANG: It's your turn, actually.
 MR. BEAM: It is? I thought I started on Monday?
 MR. WANG: You did start on Monday.
 MR. BEAM: Well, then. To-day's Friday. That's me, you, me, you—I'm sorry, you're quite right—me. All right for the stenographer to start taking?
 MR. WANG: Certainly.
A shorthand-writer yawns and opens a pad. MR. BEAM and MR. WANG clear their throats.
 MR. BEAM: Has Your Excellency any change to report in his position as stated at our last meeting?
 MR. WANG: None. Has Yours?
 MR. BEAM: None. But my Government wishes me to bring about a situation where the use of force will not be enlisted in settling the Formosa Strait problem.
 MR. WANG: So does mine.
The shorthand-writer snaps his pad shut, bows and withdraws.
 MR. BEAM: Good. I'm glad you remembered the talk. That's the nearest I've come to forgetting it altogether.
 MR. WANG: I forgot it once, two years ago.
 MR. BEAM: Me too. That was the day we had the bet on about the Confucius quotation. [*They begin to draw again.*]



"To be on the safe side, the share-out will be by cheque."

MR. WANG: Who are you drawing this time?
 MR. BEAM: Mr. Chou En-lai. Who are you?
 MR. WANG: It began as Hammar-skjöld but I think it's turning out to be Dulles.
 MR. BEAM: Ever been to Quemoy?
 MR. WANG: Where?
 MR. BEAM: Quemoy. You know—Matsu, Quemoy, those parts.
 MR. WANG: No.
 MR. BEAM: Me neither. What's the time?
 MR. WANG: Ten to twelve.
 MR. BEAM: I should think we could pack it in for to-day, wouldn't you?
 MR. WANG: I should be glad to. My work piles up terribly at the Embassy.

(*He pushes over his drawing.*) Good?
 MR. BEAM: Pretty good. But doesn't Dulles wear glasses with only top rims?
 MR. WANG: No, no. Full rims.
 MR. BEAM: Top rims.
 MR. WANG: Full rims.
 MR. BEAM: Stop, old man. If we can remember to take this up at to-morrow's meeting it ought to be good for twenty minutes.
 MR. WANG: Good idea. Excellent.
They rise and move to the door.
 MR. BEAM: I must get a paper. See how many shells your boys loosed off yesterday.
 MR. WANG (*as they go*): Right. Can I have a look when you've finished with it?
 [*Exeunt.*]



New Hope for Brighter Rugby

By FERGUSON MACLAY

NOW that letters are beginning to reappear in the press on the subject of dull, frustrating, and "spoiling" rugby, and the vague mutterings heard from the stands during the past few seasons—that the game is no longer the spectacle it was—are surging up into the annual roar, it comes as a relief to read the findings of a club committee (which prefers at the moment to remain anonymous) based on bold and imaginative experiment.

The report—and it deserves some verbatim quotation—runs as follows:

"... Nothing can be done (without re-revising the laws) about the numerical strength of a team, nor about the shape of the ball; but the disposition of the players in the field can legally be arranged so that the ball can be given more 'air.' (See any press report of any match during the season 1957/58.)

"Experiments in practice games have proved that three forwards and twelve backs speed up the game beyond all recognition; and indeed, in one trial—between sides playing one hooker, two general-purpose forwards, two scrum halves, three fly-halves, six threequarters and a five-twelfth (this last to take up the role of full back should it be necessary)—the score after forty minutes' play was: Colours, nine goals (one dpd.), five tries; Whites, one goal, eleven tries.

"Facts established by an analysis of these experimental games were:—

"1. Forward Play. The number of

set scrums was reduced to a minimum. (There did not appear to be sufficient time for them.) There was none of the 'spoiling' tactics employed, for example, by the too fast-breaking wing forward—since the wing forward within the meaning of the phrase had ceased to exist. No matter where the ball emerged from a scrum, there was always a scrum half waiting for it; and while this made for a certain 'crowding' around the scrum and muttered argument out of the side of the mouth, there was no hold-up of the ball in the second row—for obvious reasons. The frustrating 'feet up' was eliminated since it was found that the scrum collapsed immediately unfair attempts to hook were employed.

"Line-Outs. The situation here was little changed, except that as there were fewer participants the atmosphere was friendlier—there was not so much of the 'Who-are-you-pushing?' and 'Keep-your-elbows-to-yourself' feeling which does so much to spoil the old-fashioned line-out.

"2. Back Play. Experiment here was naturally on the basis of trial and error. It was discovered that unless scrums packed down exactly along a line bisecting the playing pitch length-wise, there was a certain 'bunching' of the two back divisions on the open side—i.e. inter-passing became mechanical, especially among the threequarters, and covering an opposite number became a matter of picking one's *vis-à-vis* out of a crowd, so that occasionally four or five backs found themselves hurling opponents into touch simultaneously. It was also noticed from the touchline that team-mates tended to hand each other off in the heat of the moment. It is felt that these minor problems will, with perseverance and common sense, sort themselves out... Each back division was in possession so often that (a) it ran itself off its feet, (b) defence became unnecessary and (c) spectacular running became not only a feature but a necessity.

"3. The Referee. The referee's duties were still arduous, and it became plain that he would also require to be a rapid and accurate calculator. The use of a 'telegraph' was recommended."

A footnote to the report based on an unofficial discussion after the Committee's sitting is not without interest:

"An authoritative opinion was expressed after the meeting that progressive variations of back play in the future might even mean that forwards could be eliminated; but in argument it was maintained that any given 'movement' had to start somewhere, and further that there had to be somebody to charge, or attempt to charge, down kicks at goal from tries, etc.—a task which backs were by nature disinclined to undertake."

If these courageous recommendations are adopted—and surely only administrative details stand in the way—then we can look forward to some out-of-the-ordinary matches in the future.

In Camera

HAROUN AL RASCHID, Caliph of Bagdad,
Went out at night to get to know the plebs,
Most cunningly disguised.

Harold Macmillan has the self-same fad

To meet the People, not the peers and debbs—

Only he's televised.

F. L. M.

Wine, Women, No Song

By B. A. YOUNG

Wine-tasting is not quite the same thing as wine-drinking, and a slightly different code of deportment is required. Here are a few notes for beginners.

THERE are proverbially five reasons why men drink, into which I don't propose to go at the moment (any good dealer in poker-work mottoes can supply them); but only three of them apply to wine-tasting. The two to be excluded are "being dry" and "lest we should be by and by"; anyone who goes to a wine-tasting with a roaring thirst is heading for trouble. The object of a wine-tasting is not to put the stuff away but to assess the relative values of a varied assortment of bottles. It should thus rate high as a civilized exercise with devotees of Dean Swift, who made Gulliver explain to the Houyhnhnms as a token of our culture that "we ate when we were not hungry and drank without the provocation of thirst."

Tyros who jog elbows with notable connoisseurs as they pick up the art of tasting should not, however, go away with the idea that the wine-tasting code always applies when drinking for culture rather than for pleasure. Because it is *de rigueur* at a tasting to roll your drink around your mouth, soak your tongue in it, and then spit it out into a bin of sawdust, there is no need to do the same with your dry Martini at the reception for Marlene Garbo at the Barchester, and, in fact, if you do so you may easily cause several smartly-dressed women to sweep out with expressions of disdain. On the other hand, if those same women swallowed their wine at a tasting with the same avidity as their gin at the Barchester, they would run a considerable risk of themselves being swept out, probably with an expression of dismay.

Before even beginning to take part, the visitor to a wine-tasting must find out (if he doesn't know) who his host is, and which of the others present matter. There is no disguising the fact that the sight of a row of œnophiles sniffing their wine, twiddling it round in their glasses, examining it for the presence of goldfish, stroking it, setting fire to it, anything in the world except drinking it, can be a very daunting one. Anyone who feels like being daunted by it should just go right ahead. The man

who, having got rid of his hat and coat, takes one look at the company and, slapping the nearest back, announces "Hundred to six I get round before any of those squares," only to find that the back belongs to the founder of the feast, is not likely to see himself on the invitation list another time.

The actual process of tasting the wine is very simple. To quote from an erudite little essay entitled *The Future of Expectoration*, by Mr. Guy Prince, who has done so much to raise wine-tasting to the level of a national sport, "To taste wine you must first try its bouquet . . . then roll it round your palate so that the taste-buds do their work, then you must form your opinion, and finally you must spit it out."

It will readily be seen that only men and women of quick judgment are likely to be a social success at this game. If it takes you several minutes to make up your mind about a wine, the company is likely to be deprived of your conversation for a long time as you gaze anxiously around the cellar, your taste-buds awash, your lips sealed.

In an emergency it is sometimes better to have some ready-made opinions available so that you can empty your

mouth and reply to some pressing question, such as "What do you think of the new Eliot play?" without interposing an embarrassing silence. Opinions about wine are notoriously as ambiguous as the utterances of the Delphic oracle, and a few handy words such as "acceptable," "interesting," "restrained," and so on, will generally see you through.

There is no need to emphasize one's judgments by the use of such phrases as "Wow," "Yum yum" or "Pheh."

This matter of spitting is one which may be said, at the risk of a little ambiguity, to be coming increasingly into the public eye. At Messrs. Lebègue's tasting this week, Guy Prince has established a school of expectoration, aimed mainly at lady tasters, where the gentle art will be demonstrated by the greatest masters in the land. One remembers Sapper's character who, desiring to tell a French peasant that he had crashed an aeroplane into a field of onions, could get no nearer than "*Nous avons craché dans les rognons.*" The point of impact of the ejected wine is not important from the tasting point of view; but from the purely social angle it is advisable to use



"... and trodden, I should say, by Jacques Dupont fils."

the sawdust-filled troughs provided and to avoid the floor or the kidneys of fellow-guests.

A point upon which wine impresarios (one can hardly think of such men merely as merchants) are adamant is that you cannot hope to form an unclouded judgment on a wine if you reek of *Cuir de Russie* or Roses of Ispahan after-shave tonic lotion (for men). This is no disparagement of those noble scents, only the recognition of the inescapable fact that they do not blend particularly well with Château Margaux or Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. You wouldn't nibble at *pâté de foie gras* while making mad, passionate love; there are luxuries in this world that demand the stage to themselves. I have seen a man arrive at a wine-tasting with after-shave still glistening on his chin. He was aware of the solecism: "Don't worry, old boy," he said, clapping his host across the shoulders, "I'll drown it in a minute." From his side-pockets he took a tobacco-pouch and an enormous pipe . . .

One final word of warning. Keep your eye on the wine. There was once a tyro wine-taster who found himself standing beside a world-famous connoisseur in front of a bottle of a burgundy of legendary excellence. Nervous but composed, conscious all the time of the expert eye on the back of his neck, he poured himself a sample, imbibed it, rolled it round his tongue,

breathed out heavily through his nose while he tried to think of a suitable comment, spat it out, and took a sliver of cheese, courteously provided by the management, to clear his palate. Turning at last to the connoisseur, "What a smashing bit of Gruyère!" he said.

Wine-tasting, in the classic phrase, is a diverting pastime for young and old, for ladies as well as men. It is not so intellectual as chamber-music, it is not so light-hearted as strip-tease; no one

will burst out into "*Ach, du lieber Augustin*" as he waves his tiny libation of some promising new vintage around his head, nor will anyone entangle you with problems that need an intimate understanding of Einstein and a slide-rule to answer. It is, in fact, the ideal pursuit with which to while away those idle hours between eleven in the morning and four in the afternoon.

It also, of course, leads in the long run to a wider knowledge of wine.

Vintage Match Card

By BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

"HOW about a bottle of Chamberlain 1945?" I said. "I seem to remember that 'forty-five was a great year. All five of the Victory Tests were played out, Donnelly of New Zealand averaged 87 for the season, Keith Miller hit 700-odd in thirteen innings, and no bowler made much of a showing. A truly great year for burgundies."

"I don't follow," said my host, a genial but unimaginative fellow from the City. The fact that he was from the City was advertised by his expense account, which in turn was advertised by the orange-peel texture and rosé colouring of his nose.

"Didn't expect you would," I said. "Or we might try a Richebourg '47.

A marvellous summer. Sixteen batsmen with aggregates of over two thousand. Middlesex champions. The terrible twins, Compton and Edrich, breaking all batting records—remember Compton's eighteen centuries?—and not a single bowler averaging less than sixteen runs a wicket. Mmm, yes, a Richebourg '47 would be heavenly."

"May I put in a small plea," said my host, creasing his cheeks with heavy sarcasm, "for a Pommard '44? Unless my memory plays me tricks, Tommy Handley was going great guns in ITMA in 'forty-four. A great wine, noble, subtle, significant, moving."

I put the wine-list face down on the elegant Soho table, carefully selected a cigarette—a Players 1958—from my host's case, and lit up. Only when the smoke pall was thick enough to remind me of Bramall Lane did I choose to reply.

"I have always regarded wine-drinking as an un-English practice," I said. "All the mumbo-jumbo, the expertise, the sniffing and lip-smacking. It just isn't us. And I hate wine snobs. All those dreadful types one sees outside the Ivy or the Caprice, mugging up their vintage tables from those ridiculous little cards! I was in the men's room at the Savoy the other day when a fellow tapped me on the shoulder—fellow old enough to be my father—and said 'I say, old boy, wonder if I could borrow your vintage chart for a couple of secs? Forgotten mine.' I just looked him up and down and went on washing my hands. Disgraceful.

"You, my friend, were puzzled a moment ago when I anglicized wine by relating it to our great summer game.



"Your eyes are pools of Château Cuvée-Bon-la-Madeleine, your lips are cherry brandy, your cheeks are a pink Veuve Cliquot, your hair a lustrous Manzanilla, your brows . . ."

Hollowood



"Well, so far, I haven't resorted to the unladylike procedure of spitting any out."

But why? It is well known that France, or that part of France which includes the great wine-producing regions of Bordeaux, Touraine and Burgundy, gets most of its weather, as we do, from the West, from the Gulf Stream cyclones and the Azores anticyclones. It follows, surely, that our summers, the summers of Touraine and Old Trafford, Bordeaux and Lord's, Burgundy and Trent Bridge, have much in common. A vintage year for the wines of France is also a vintage year for English batsmen. The same sun warms the backs of the flannelled fools and blue-denimed viticulturists.

"And so, *mon choux*, it is possible for anyone who knows his *Wisden* to be completely *au fait* with the wines of

France. Shall we settle for the Chambertin and the Victory Tests?"

After this provocative peroration my friend—naturally enough—had to inquire more deeply into the honesty and validity of my theory.

"How about 1937?" he said, removing an invisible speck of cork from his dry sherry.

"Superb," I said. "Hard, dry wickets all summer through. Why, I myself had scores of 8 not out, 13, 11, 7, 15 (hit wicket) and 22, and the village were only once dismissed for less than sixty."

"Nineteen-thirty-eight?" my host said.

"Ah, terrible. My scores in June and July hardly bear repeating. Seven games abandoned. Wet wickets every-

where. I remember getting caught at slip before I had opened my account three games running. And what's more, the village dropped me from the side during the holidays to make room for the rector's son, and d'you know what *his* scores were? I'll tell you. He got 0, 1, 0 and 2. I had to laugh. After that of course they brought me back because of my wife's work in the tea- tent. Worst bottle of wine I ever drank was a 1938 Fleurie."

"Actually, 1938 wasn't as bad as you think," said my host. "Only moderate, I agree, but not exactly hopeless. How about 1940?"

"Hideous. No cricket, no decent wine."

"Nineteen-fifty?"

"Well, I'm not so sure. The West Indians were here and got a lot of runs, but I didn't do too well myself. Averaged five-point-something from fourteen innings. I always regard 1950 as a dubious year for claret and burgundy. Avoid it without knowing why."

"That's remarkably honest of you," said my host. "1953?"

"Oh, definitely drinkable. Bill Johnston of Australia averaged one hundred and two and . . ."

"But Johnston was sixteen times not out in seventeen innings!"

"Don't quibble! May, Edrich, Simpson and Hutton all got up to the

two thousand five hundred runs mark, and I notched eighty-nine for Ixtholme in only ten innings."

"Very well," said the expense account, "we'll settle for the Chambertin. But tell me, what's 1958 going to be like?"

"Too early to say yet. The secretary's been sick and hasn't had time to work out the averages. My guess is that there won't be much to drink in the burgundy or claret line, but then I didn't play much. My knee, you know."

"But don't worry," I added, looking the man right in the nose, "I'm sure that 1958 will turn out to be a good year for gin."

Two Kinds of Scotch

By IAN PEEBLES

WHISKY has always been more than just a drink to the Scot. Once, when in the North, I was rash enough to mention gin and Scotch whisky in the same breath. The blast of reproof this elicited from my host, one of the major of many grand characters in the trade, rings in my ears to this day.

True, the distiller, being as a rule a canny Scot, is engaged in his trade for practical purposes, but, possibly because he is also likely to be a Celt, that does not prevent him from regarding his craft as an art and his "end-product" as an *objet d'art*.

In this he has much justification, for his spirit is not only beautiful but indeed unique. So far no man outside

Scotland has been able to simulate the flavour and character of Scotch whisky, neither from his natural geological sources nor by synthetic means. The fact that the enterprising Japanese renamed a village Scotland gave a spurious authenticity to their distillation but brought its quality no nearer to that of Speyside. For in several fairly clearly defined localities in Scotland there obtain conditions of soil, water and climate which produce a result which has so far defied all imitation.

Nor is it possible to reproduce a particular spirit to a given specification in its own country. One of the most famous distilleries, finding that demand outran supply, erected an exactly



similar plant to the original one at about a hundred and fifty yards' distance from it. Water, method and ingredients were also identical, but the new distillation proved so different from its parent that after some further experiment the still was shut down and the buildings are now used as warehouses.

Before describing the products of these areas it is necessary to say that Scotch whisky is divided into two broad categories, Malt and Grain. The former is distilled from a mash of barley in a simple pot still and is full of character and flavour. Grain whisky is made largely from maize in a Coffey or patent still, which extracts a great deal more from it, thus producing a rather lighter but by no means neutral spirit.

The Malts may be divided geographically into Highland and Lowland, Campbelltown and Islay; all with their own characteristics.

The Highland Malt is a splendid draught in its native environment, drunk with the local water, but a trifle rich to the palate and liver of the Southern city worker. It was the blending of various malts with the lighter grain whisky which originally popularized whisky outside its native country. In

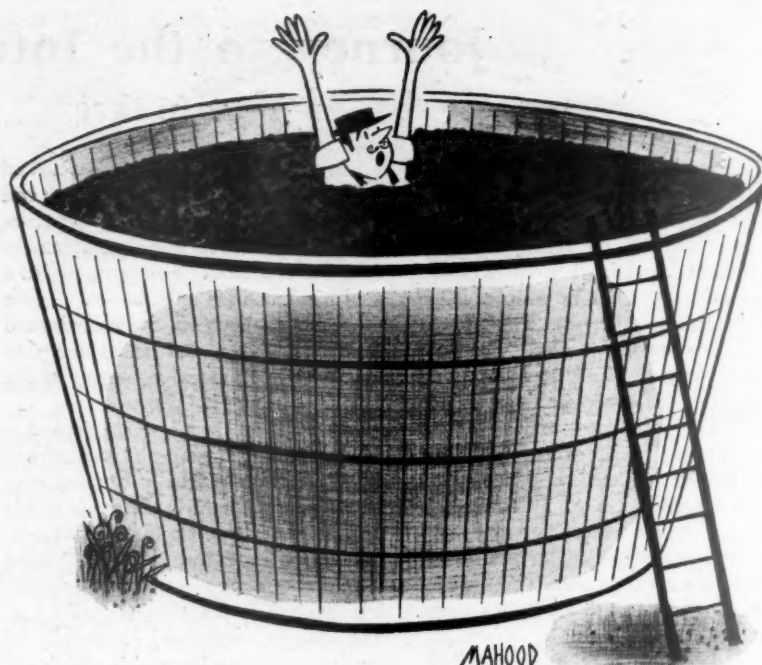


a bottle of any well-known brand there may be thirty varieties of malts and grains.

The greatest whiskies are the Speysides produced in an area lying roughly east of the River Ness to the borders of Banff, a pocket blessed with one of the best climates in these isles. On the gentle mellow folds of the land round Elgin one may see, in every direction, the typical "pagoda" which crowns the drying kiln and clearly distinguishes the distillery from other premises. Here at Rothes is Glen Grant, a mile or two on at Craigellachie is Macallan, and away down past Ballindalloch is the Glenlivet. In the midst of a cluster of illustrious names they probably rank highest in the connoisseur's esteem.

At one time my parents lived in this pleasant land, so I was able to visit it quite frequently. I have always regarded as one of the more profitable items in a somewhat erratic education my annual trip down the Glen with an elder o' the kirk whose professional duties as an architect took him to a number of distilleries. When warmed by a few drams of smooth, round, malt whisky straight out of the wood we neither of us cared if it snowed, which it frequently did.

On the Isle of Islay are about eight distilleries rejoicing in fine Gaelic names such as Bruichladdich, Laphroaig and Bunnahabhain, names as bleakly discouraging to the Sassenach tongue as their products are tasteful.



These have a powerful character, and in a blend are as double bass in an orchestra, but to be treated with discretion because of their dominant personality. Incidentally, Laphroaig is the only distillery in the charge of a lady, a certain Miss Williamson, who does not herself drink whisky but knows everything there is to know about it. Nearby on the mainland are the Campbeltowns, but their number has decreased over the years and there are but two in action at the present time.

The Lowland pot stills are less pronounced in character than the Highlands and so ideal for the blender in making his balance.

The blender is a man of deep knowledge and sensitive nose. From long experience he selects from these various whiskies the makes and proportions he knows will bring him the exact result his

particular firm requires, and to these he will add up to 60 per cent of grain. By law whisky must mature in the cask for three years, but the greater whiskies will lie in sherry casks for very much longer. Once in the bottle, whisky ceases to develop. When distilled it is colourless and although it takes some colour from the cask the blender does, in practice, add a harmless artificial colouring for uniformity.

Like many other profitable undertakings the whisky industry has ever been the prey of successive Governments. The other day in my office an elderly member of the trade recalled his first week's employment—as office boy. He was sent out on Budget day to fetch an evening paper in order that his boss might ascertain what further inroads were to be made upon their trade. With a thrill of importance he placed the journal before the great man. "There you are, sir," he said, "they've raised the duty from 10s. 6d. to 11s. a gallon." His boss's complexion was normally that of early heather, but at this announcement it advanced to full bloom. "Keep your hat on, boy," he thundered, "there's no job for you here—we're ruined!"

The office boy has survived ruination to see the duty rise twenty-fold.



"Actually that 'miracle of subtle dryness' is the sulphate of potassium remaining after gypsum has removed the potassium bitartrate."

Journey to the Interior

By DAVID REES

IN July the copy chief let me know that in one month's time I would be no longer with the advertising agency. It had all been a ghastly mistake, we agreed. I wrote a lot of letters and saw a lot of people. One grey September afternoon I left Perth for a journey to the interior. The train crawled along the historic route along which the hordes of Gaeldom, Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and ambitious men hurrying south to become Fleet Street editors and heads of departments had all travelled. Now hydro-electric engineers, atomic factory surveyors and stage designers destined for the drama festival were my companions on the way north. I was going to teach in a prep school.

The first few days were tranquil. When the headmaster had interviewed

me in an hotel near King's Cross he had been carrying a pile of *Paris-Match* and *Confidential*. Now he read *The Scotsman* and behaved as an important member of the kirk-session. The boys needed a firm hand was his only advice. I gave them lots of dictation, made them read *Scotland's Story*, and asked them to identify place names on a map of the world.

My bedroom window overlooked a valley. In the mornings the weather was fine, but the sky usually clouded over by noon. By the early afternoon it was drizzling and large clouds trickled over the hill, crossed the valley at ground level and disappeared over the opposite hill. Soon the rest of the staff took shape. The matron reminisced incessantly of the great Glasgow hospital in which she had been a nursing sister, while the

Latin master, a tall tanned man, talked of his Mediterranean holidays and smiled all the time. He was also the Scoutmaster. The new housekeeper, a former naval hospital matron, spoke familiarly of great admirals and great traditions, and often discussed with me her ancient Scots ancestry in the most tortured English county accent I had ever heard. The French master was the mayor of the palace. Overfed, prim and impregnably smug, he organized religious study groups. As the headmaster's assistant he ran the school.

October passed. The monsoon went. A period of cruel Arctic cold set in. As I walked back from the cinema in the town two miles away the Northern Lights flickered. Sometimes I fell sprawling and cursing over the trees blown down by the gales that ravaged



"Where the devil's that half-bottle of claret?"

the countryside with cyclonic ferocity. The region had long been publicized as a place of peace for those fleeing from urban turmoil. Disillusion, as always, was swift and cruel. Huge hydro-electric schemes covered many of the adjacent glens. Large gangs of Italian and Ukrainian workers, bottled up in the Hydro Board's cantonments on the moors on week nights, roamed the area on Saturdays. They travelled in wolf packs of blue-painted long-wheel-base Land Rovers. With the stencilled hieroglyphs of the Board on their doors, and with their fifteen-foot radio antennae snapping as their Fangio-worshipping drivers hurled them around impossible corners, the Land Rovers gave a Cocteau touch to the tourist-agency background of firs and heather. Tired of the grey skies, the drizzle, sick of it all, the labourers smashed to pieces the sequestered calm of the crow-stepped-gabled, ogee-towered fake Scottish baronial hotels built for the Victorian middle classes of Dundee and Glasgow.

Once there was a fight in the bar of one of the hotels. Pushed to one side as the chairs went over I met the school boilerman. "How do you like Scotland?" he asked me. Some little time later I knew the real life stories of my colleagues in the staff room. As we left my friend grunted. "Ay, it's a queer world . . . Now take the Latin master . . . you were a newspaperman, weren't you?"

"Advertising," I mumbled. Drunk and six hundred miles away it was still something to be careful about.

" . . . Some of these stories on the front pages of the Sunday newspapers," he said. "Would a journalist pay good money for information leading to one of those?"

We were still in the hotel yard. The blue Land Rovers were yawning out to the main road, surrounded by a lot of exhaust smoke and shouting.

"Taxi," I bawled.

"You'll have to 'phone for one."

I knew he thought I had let him down.

With the information I'd been told I thought I was the only one in the know. Disillusion, as always, was swift and cruel. In the next few weeks I was told much the same information by two others, suitably edited, of course, when it related to them. Now I worried. What on earth were they saying about me?

November passed. The cloud still



trickled across the valley. Now there were only just over six hours of daylight. Snow fell. The housekeeper developed pneumonia. The headmaster's rages got worse. One night I was the master on duty. The fourth form set their classroom on fire. First on the scene was the headmaster. I was in the staff-room reading a weekly magazine, with my feet on the mantelpiece. Two days later the matron asked me for my opinion of the headmaster. Instead of giving her my usual reply I chose my words carefully. "He is the best headmaster we have," I replied. I gave many detentions. Then I gave them dictation, readings from *Scotland's Story*, and got the map of the world out.

One day I saw a notice chalked outside the station. "The sleeper for Euston will leave fifteen minutes late . . ." Soon afterwards I saw the headmaster. Next term I would be no longer on the staff. It had all been a ghastly mistake, I began to think. The last person I spoke to was the boilerman.

"Keep in touch," he said.

"Ring me here when the story breaks," I replied, giving him a 'phone number. It is always best to keep in touch.

In the morning I stared at the houses of Wembley and Watford. Once at Euston I hurried to the buffet. Smoothing down the back of an envelope I picked up my pencil. The situations vacant page of the *Advertiser's Weekly* lay open in front of me.

☆

"Muscle man Tommy Yearbye, ex-business manager to Diana Dors, is going into partnership with Sabrina . . ." said Mr. Yearbye: "I just think Sabrina is the most wonderful girl. I think she is going to be a really great actress . . ."

Daily Express

Pretty good himself.

No Personal Rain

I SO clearly remember
September
Nineteen-twenty-seven,
It was under its blue heaven
That I fell
Under first love's spell.

Forget how it started,
Even how we parted,
Couldn't place
Her face,
All
I recall
Of those thirty days
Is the sun's rays
That shone
On and on
From golden dawns
To dancing on lawns
(Music, a pause,
Thin, alfresco applause),
And cool
By a slightly smelly pool,
The necessary shade.
Of a glade,
Where the sun
Like a ginger bun
Cloudlessly sank
Into a dark blue blank
Until the night
Turned moon-bright.

That was the sort of weather
We had together.

Which is why

I
Was surprised the other day
To hear the meteorologists say
That the September
I so clearly remember
Because of my first dates
Was actually the wettest until
nineteen-fifty-eight's.

J. B. BOOTHROYD

FOR
WOMEN



The Extremity of Fashion

"FINE by degrees and beautifully less," the elegant feet of fashionable women are achieving a new perfection of slenderness. Mr. Edward Rayne, shoemaker to the Queen, tells us that the long-legged silhouette must be carried through to slimmer and more needle-sharp shoes than we have yet seen. Mr. Tony Hutchings, the bright young chip of that famous old last down in Bristol, in presenting his designs for autumn, pushed the point home with rapier toes and stiletto heels.

Lest any woman shrink from such extreme extremities it should be made clear that it is not necessary to suffer in order to be beautifully shod. A good last ensures that, however slender the appearance of the shoe, there are no pressure points. The chiselled toe, the rapier, the goosebill, are all blocked before the point, so that the wearer's toes are not in the narrowest part at all. The important thing is to choose a shoe that is not too broad-fitting for you; it must cling closely at the instep, or the foot will slip forward.

Mr. Rayne has, this season, forgone such indulgences as bows and trimmings: "Upper treatments are understated." And he says that with to-day's short skirts there is an inevitable movement towards bars, cross-straps, and T-straps. These, with their Period 1920 flavour, may be smart, but they are unbecoming to the average or over-average ankle. The look of fashion is more wisely sought in modish materials: Raynes showed a series of Tattersall check shoes in "silk tweed," with handbags to match; their Club Red leather has been given a dapple finish; colours are preferred to black, unless black has some strong surface treatment. They

marshalled a splendid turn-out of "very highly polished Bengal Lizards," and crocodiles paraded in green, red, and taupe. The *Miss Rayne* shoes are less high as to heel and price, and the new *Miss Rayne* Travellers, made of soft suèded pig-skin, are very lovable young things. They have flexible crêpe rubber soles, and are so light and lissom that they will bend double in your hand. "Little pigs make the best of pork," and they also make the prettiest of trotters.

Now that the rigours of summer are over we should prepare for the ten-times worse that is to come. Hutchings' high-heeled bootee with fashionably pointed toe, fur cuff, and copper-sheathed heel, makes a very chi-chi



little hoof for pavement prinking; and Morlands of Glastonbury are turning out towny Madam boots in fine black suède, sheepskin lined, with elasticized astrakhan at the ankle. Morlands began

in 1908 by making sheepskin foot-muffs when motoring was coming into vogue and the fair motoriste in her husband's Mercédès was exposed to all the elements. Some of their customers asked them to make divided foot-muffs with a compartment for each foot; and from these it was an obvious step to sheepskin boots.

Specimens from Morlands' museum were included in a parade of their Autumn 1958 models. We saw the first boots ever to have zip fasteners—a unique concession granted to Morlands in 1928; and we saw the flying boots that Amy Johnson wore across the Atlantic in 1930. All the early boots were of reversed sheepskin, and looked very clumsy compared with the suède-hide boots with sheepskin linings that

they now make. One of the smartest new models combines suède-hide with natural pony-skin (the skewbald hair still on it), lined with sheepskin; and the new Morland *Bottine* is a compromise between a boot and a shoe. Cut as low as a shoe, it is sheepskin lined and has a draught-proof ankle collar made of elasticized astrakhan for town, of elasticized wool-ribbing for the country.

Bottines have micro-cellular rubber soles and are very neat and light to wear about the house on cold mornings, and yet are eminently field and forest-worthy. In their gnomeland colours—goldfinch, moss-green, nut-brown, red—they are the very thing for wintry rendezvous beneath the bare beech trees.

ALISON ADBURGHAM

☆

The Hat

I DIDN'T say I didn't like her hat. I just thought it rather young. Well, one must be honest. And she's really rather past that baby pink. Yes, we're all of us past it. But then we don't all of us *do* things to our hair, and I always think it a rather acid yellow. Let it go grey, I say, or even white. And remember Black is Kinder to the Figure. If one has a figure. No, of course, I didn't say so. Really, you might give me rather more credit than that. Do you think I'm the kind who goes round being spiteful? It's just that with her figure and her hair, at her age, she ought to know better. Someone ought to tell her. A pity she hasn't got the observant kind of husband. Of course I didn't say so. What do you take me for? I only said I'd seen her in nicer hats. My dear, I meant it well. I can't think why on earth she is offended.

JOANNA RICHARDSON

Little Beggars

THE newly-published survey on "Hawkers and Circulars in the Provinces" is practically worthless, since Professor Curveygraf has made no mention of the Children.

Surely it is significant that tradesmen's gate click-recorders average a reading of eighty-four per week during school holidays and sixty-one at any other time. Also that of the sixty-one a mere fourteen are accounted for by the band of laundry-butcher-grocer regulars and twenty by soap-powder coupon bringers, tramps and brush-men, leaving twenty-seven to the children.

Contrasting my findings with the professor's own, I discover that he has ignored the bare-kneed Jumble-sale Collectors, Raffle-ticket Sellers, Jam-jar Seekers, Bob-a-Job Lads, May Queens, Guy Fawkes bearers and Carol Singers.

I feel it is the duty of each householder to raise his eyebrows at the fact that in the tax-year ended April, 1958, he supplied to children half a ton of trousers, vases, plastic macs and candlesticks, forty-three one-pound jam-jars, twenty ounces of silver paper, and the sum of thirty shillings and sixpence in return for one badly cut privet hedge, one scrappy heap of firewood and a broken chopper, seventeen serenades, and fourteen chances of a television set. Also that he refused the tempting bait of nine school concerts, seven garden parties and a Guide and Brownie rally, only to fall at last for a grand-stand view of a Joint Schools' Health and Fitness Display.

Mr. Jim Blanket, of the Household Sign Manufacturers' Co., Ltd., informs me that he has had several requests for a durable metal gate-piece reading, "No Hawkens, Circulars, Children," and one for a similar piece, red lettering on white ground, "Children Beware of Snakes!" This would seem to indicate growing awareness, but much must yet be done to crush the menace.

The best solution so far seems to be to have children of one's own. That way you get a mere half-dozen playmates rehearsing carols, maypole dances and street maps in your spare back bedroom, and using your potting-shed for storing trousers, vases, plastic macs and candlesticks.

HAZEL TOWNSON

On Bended Knees

THEY tell me it will be only a matter of weeks before I'll be able to walk again. When I can the editor of a certain American glossy is going to hear something to his disadvantage, if he doesn't get a whack over the head with a crutch.

The very idea of telling women, especially women like me who read and believe, that one way to beautify their newly-revealed knees is by taking up Cossack dancing!

I did take it up, and I put it back down again, thanks, but not before my neighbour (bless her little old measuring cup!) came by and found me half in and half out of a kazotsky. If she hadn't needed a bit of sugar my left leg might still be wound around the small of my back.

Kazotsky may not be the correct word at all for the dance step I have in mind; perhaps some alert Cossack will come forward to announce that a kazotsky is really a sweet bun with fruit and nuts in it. But for some reason I connect it with that feat in which the dancer, squatting down with arms folded, shoots out first one leg and then the other. Kazotsky sounds reasonable for that, I think.

My Cossack dance step nomenclature

stopped abruptly, and possibly incorrectly, with kazotsky, so I had to make up names for the other steps I had seen. That one in which the dancer stretches out his arms, leaps into the air, and seems to touch his palms with his toes, I called the upsky-daisky.

These were fun but they made me dizzy, and I blame them for the fact that when I finally went into a kazotsky I couldn't get out of it again.

Now that I can do nothing more than reflect, I am reflecting. Cossack dancing may or may not improve the knees. I once saw a Russian dance troupe in which one young lady seemed to be bouncing all the way across the stage on her knees, but I didn't think they looked any better for it. I am quite willing to rouge my knees if fashion so dictates. I might even paint pictures on them. But I'm completely through with kazotskys. Dance steps or fruit buns, the Cossacks can have them.

WANDA BURGAN

☆

"When I see a beetle the size of a bison inserting its plastic claws into the buttocks of some tedious Hollywood blonde I heave a sigh of delight because this is just what I have been wanting to do myself for years and years and years . . ."

Beverley Nichols in a *New Statesman* letter
We never guessed.



"Would cooking sherry be all right with mock turtle soup?"

Toby Competitions

No. 37—Last Words

MOST people know such Famous Last Words as Beethoven's "I shall hear in heaven," Goethe's "Light, more light," or Chesterfield's "Give Dayrolles a chair." You are invited to invent dying phrases for any three celebrities, either living or dead.

A prize consisting of a framed *Punch* original, to be selected from all available drawings, is offered for the best entry. Runners-up will receive book tokens to the value of one guinea. Entries (any number but each on a separate piece of paper and accompanied by a separate entry token, cut out from the bottom left-hand corner of this page) by first post on Friday, October 17, to TOBY COMPETITION, No. 37, *Punch*, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Report on Competition No. 34 (Coming Shortly)

The requirement was a theatrical gossip-writer's reference to a rehearsal of *Othello*, seen as a new production. Almost every competitor made allusions to current aspects of the colour problem. The difficulty in judging arose from the fact that while many entries were good

regarded as gossip paragraphs and many gave characteristic modern estimates of the play, few succeeded in doing both things at once. First home in a field which was more like a platers' race than a classic was:

E. O. PARROTT
47 DAVER COURT
CHELSEA MANOR STREET
LONDON, S.W.3

His contribution was:

NEW DRAMA ON RACE RELATIONS

Popped into a rehearsal of a new searching play on this much-discussed topic. This up-to-the-minute drama on the emotional entanglements of a mixed marriage should set the West End ablaze. It opens at Blackpool on the 29th. I talked to last year's star deb Elspeth Blimington-Gore who is making her stage debut as Bianca, a lady of easy virtue. "I'm not applying the 'Method,'" she said, "as I am getting married soon, not to any 'Othello' though. Mother draws the line there. Though we are thinking of calling the love-nest Casablanca," she added laughingly.

To the following, quoted in full or in part, book tokens are awarded:

At the Misfortune for a rehearsal of

Othello. Sir Billy produces, also plays an exacting part. Usual trouble with staging; outside bed fills small stage and repeated requests for Lights Out unheeded by electricians. Maureen plays our ideal heroine, "so delicate with her needle," there's lots about embroidery. Foodmanship, too, how's about Tongue in Aspic, girls? The place: Cyprus. The U.N. has intervened and sent Italian troops issued with steel waistcoats. Some gangsters fake an incident to settle a private quarrel. Dialogue rather fusty but incidental music all trumpets. A salt and sorry rheum was my reaction.—J. M., Trebles Cott, Kingston, Kingsbridge, Devon

Now I know why Roma Vocefine, Jamaica's top pop calypso man our side, dropped his safe spot on "To-night" for the title role in *Othello*. This play cashes in on everything topical and controversial. The black-loves-white angle will shock; part of the action takes place in Cyprus, and I heard at least four quotable quotes.—William McRea, 33 Bridge Road, Ashton-on-Ribble, Preston

Love triangle (third side invented by villain) is plot of tragedy rehearsing at Freedom Theatre. But real theme is miscegenation. Kenneth Spencer, coloured pop singer of Rive Gauche, Paris, takes title role of Muir O'Thelo, battle-decorated veteran marrying teenage white heiress. Costume question agitating theatre is: should cast appear modern American or yesteryear Ruritania? Disclosure of Arkansas' Little Rock and London's Notting Hill as play's triggers may not be prevented by adopting furbelow dress and language. But nervous London police may require this as condition for show licence.—Peter Leslie, 39 South Drive, Cheam, Surrey

Watch for the pre-release hit "Willow Song" sung by glamorous Desdemona. If enough retouching can be done to a patchy dialogue she could carry this show to a smash hit with her dramatically topical black-white love interest.—Q. R. D. Skinner, 2 St. Edmond Road, Bedford

Mary Best, who plays the white wife of a coloured soldier, told me in her quaint American idiom that, because of her upbringing, by the end of each performance she was "quite choked off with the whole thing." Unhappily I had to dash off before I could ask what she meant.—David Hebden, 36 Clamricarde Gardens, London, W.2

☆

"How much is a life worth? 22-year-old Michael Maude, of Sussex Gardens, Paddington, and his friend, Michael Tyler, 21 . . . value theirs at a packet of salt each . . . To-day the two Michaels set off on a two-year exploration to New Guinea . . . They are going to a part of the country that is new to the white man and which is still inhabited by cannibal tribes . . . Said Michael Maude . . . 'We shall give them packets of salt as presents and hope it will keep them from popping us both in the dinner pot . . .'"—*Evening News*
Could be misinterpreted.

CHESTNUT GROVE

F. H. Townsend's first drawing appeared in 1904, and his last—posthumous and unfinished—in 1920.



SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE.

Subaltern. "DONNEZ-MOI, S'IL VOUS PLAÎT, DU PAIN, DE LA BEURRE ET DE LA FROMAGE, POUR LA MESSE."

Madame. "POUR LA MESSE! MON DIEU, QUELLE RELIGION!"

July 21 1913

CRITICISM



BOOKING OFFICE

Wolfe Whistles

Selected Letters of Thomas Wolfe.
Edited with an introduction by Elizabeth
Nowell. Heinemann, 25/-

Look Homeward, Angel. Thomas Wolfe.
Heinemann, 21/-

"It is always I, I, I, I, I, I, I," complained a correspondent once to George Augustus Sala, referring to Sala's newspaper column, "I wonder whether you have any idea how sick we all get of You, You, You, You, You, You, You, You!" One closes the *Selected Letters* of Thomas Wolfe (1900-1938) with somewhat similar feelings. Can there ever have been such a literary bore? And yet, in himself, Wolfe must have possessed some kind of charm. Maxwell Perkins of Scribner's took endless trouble with him; Mr. A. S. Frere of Heinemann's almost adopted him as a prodigal son.

Let me admit at once that I am not a great admirer of Wolfe's style. *Look Homeward, Angel*, with claims to be considered the best of his novels, is a two-hundred-thousand-word affair describing life in North Carolina, in which the characters seem to me without individual identity, the language and incidents unreal, and the narrative, such as it is, expanded to an inordinate and unnecessary length. It is extraordinary that people should speak of Wolfe's "vitality." "Vitality" is surely the quality above all others he lacks. It is like saying that a man who cannot hold his tongue for one second in a railway carriage shows "vitality." If Wolfe had really possessed vitality he would have been able to control the literary talents—not entirely negligible ones—with which he had been endowed.

In *Green Hills of Africa* Mr. Ernest Hemingway wrote: "Dostoevsky was made by being sent to Siberia. Writers are forged in injustice as a sword is forged. I wonder if it would make a writer of him, give him the necessary shock to cut the overflow of words and give him a sense of proportion, if they sent Tom Wolfe to Siberia or the Dry Tortugas. Maybe it would and maybe it wouldn't. He

seemed sad, really, like Carnera." Other American writers also remonstrated with Wolfe. Scott Fitzgerald even wrote him a long letter (not at all appreciated by its recipient) trying to persuade him to turn over a new leaf. It was no good; and I don't myself think the Dry Tortugas would have been any good either.

However, if we leave for a moment the question of Wolfe's merits as a writer and consider him as a phenomenon he can be found to be not without interest. In fact he seems to be the logical conclusion of a popular—and especially American—approach to life, in which any form of self-control is unfavourably contrasted with "natural" behaviour. In Wolfe we have the perfect "genius" of the Hollywood film, unable to direct his own life, inhabiting a filthy room piled high with papers, pouring out volumes of words, rarely sober, getting beaten up in his cups, never able to remember what happened, always in an emotional mess...

It could, of course, be argued that some great writers have lived like this, and that, from Poe to Fitzgerald, there has been a certain American tradition of

behaviour that leads to the "crack-up." That may be true; and it may also be true that some notable writers have also been intolerable egotists. But were they egotists in the way poor Wolfe was? Throughout the whole course of his letters, which begin when he was eight years old, there is scarcely one that presents a comprehensible picture of anyone of whom he speaks. Other individuals simply did not exist for him except in relation to himself.

He had America on his mind badly. At times he hated his country; at times he loved her. His unstemmed outpourings on the subject seem more appropriate to a politician than a novelist, and perhaps, if things had turned out rather differently, it is in the rhetoric of the hustings that his love of words might have found a place.

Miss Elizabeth Nowell tells us something of how Wolfe existed as a writer, but nothing of his background. This seems required for someone of his sort, who must certainly have been the offshoot of strange psychological pressures in youth. He is a melancholy figure, and one perhaps more suitable to be the subject of a novel than the author of one. James might have handled Wolfe's story with immense convolutions. Wolfe himself, so it seems to me, was the last person in the world to be able to deal on paper with the material that made up his own life. ANTHONY POWELL

NOVEL FACES



XXXVII—AGATHA CHRISTIE

*Miss Christie's crooks may only be detected
When everyone's been formally suspected.*

Evergreen Admiral

Hornblower in the West Indies. C. S. Forester. Michael Joseph, 15/-

In these five stories Rear-Admiral Lord Hornblower is Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels in the West Indies when Napoleon is on St. Helena and Bolivar is winning freedom for South America. There are pirates and stern chases and hurricanes, and Hornblower is much depressed by the performance of some steam tugs; but then he does tend to get depressed about anything. In a laudable attempt to show the man of action as a rounded character by describing his self-doubts as well as his competence and drive



Mr. Forester is running the risk of turning Hornblower into a naval Prufrock.

The pattern of these anecdotes is sometimes too predictable, but on the whole they are as good fun as ever. They are, of course, something more. Mr. Forester was one of the first writers to begin closing the gap between Entertainment and Literature that widened in the mid-nineteenth century. As well as his knack of tale-spinning he can describe things of utterly different kinds and his books are about much more than the events in them.

R. G. G. P.

The Gower Street Poltergeist. Peter Fleming. *Hart-Davis*, 16/-

Here is the latest crop of the deft and civilized light essays which Mr. Fleming writes in *The Spectator* under the thinning disguise of "Strix." Like all writers doomed to perform regularly in this genre he turns now and then to domestic adventures, but it is no discredit in a collection that succeeds over so wide a field. Mr. Fleming is happy both in speculation, as on his changing attitudes to his own face, and in subjects about which he really minds, such as Britain's bad record in the protection of deer. No current essayist finds better phrases: "The old ship groaned and juddered. It seemed to be full of the ghosts of plump Edwardian cooks lowering themselves into wickerwork armchairs."

The admiration of this reviewer, who rent the Cambridge Senate House by going on fire in the English Tripos, cools only at his description of a similar mishap in a duck-hide, which sounds an enviably private little arson.

E. O. D. K.

A Room in Chelsea Square. *Cape*, 15/-

The theme of this novel has seldom been handled so frankly before: yet it contains no censorable scenes and none of the sniggering "naughtiness" or delicious ambivalence with which writers have previously approached the queer encampment. The anonymous author's style is swift and straightforward, his narrative gift considerable, his knowledge of this curious cryptic jungle-world (where greed, not passion, spins the plot) immense. One reads on fascinated: will Nicholas, the young provincial journalist, succumb to his middle-aged, cerebrally-sadistic and wealthy patron Patrick? Will the phantom fashion magazine *Eleven* ever be launched, with the gross, simian gastronome Ronnie (who in public discourses elegantly of

epicurean delights while in private devouring whole peaches and spitting the stones across his four-poster bedroom) in the editorial chair? Consistently diverting, this may be the novel about homosexuality to end all novels on the subject. Patrick, with his talent for intrigue, his innate stinginess and carefully-calculated generosity—the most convincing portrait of his type drawn in fiction so far—makes the book, which in-turn will make many a reader's day.

J. M-R.

The Gold Slippers. Frances Parkinson Keyes. *Eyre and Spottiswoode*, 15/-

Her publishers tell us that Frances Parkinson Keyes "has grown to be the most popular and best-loved woman writer in the world." That is a bold statement, though there can be no doubt of the popularity which arises, surely, from industry and competence. In *The Gold Slippers* she gives what we have grown to expect from her—a most excellent story with just the right blend of thrills and love interest. A dancing girl of easy virtue is found murdered in a rice bin, and only found because one foot in a gold slipper protruded from the grain. Prosper, the hero, had given her some golden slippers, his family owned the rice mill, and he had just become engaged to a most eligible girl. Everything became more than awkward, and the author develops the succeeding situations with skill and clarity. She describes her characters and their settings so faithfully that we can see them through the mind's eye. The only snag is that she lacks the power to make us know or love or hate them, and this dulls the excitement we should feel as the plot of this nearly admirable book thickens.

B. E. B.

The Cross of Baron Samedi. Richard Dohrman. *Hamilton*, 18/-

Impossible, in a short review, to convey the quality of this distinguished first novel, which marks without any doubt the emergence of a major American writer. Conceived on the most ambitious plane, flawlessly carried through, its scope comprises irony, pity, humour and terror; love both sacred and profane; action and passion; a multiplicity of living characters; an exotic, unfamiliar background (Haiti, under the American occupation in the 1930s) charted in abundant detail; and a cumulative train of events which never gives the effect of being fortuitous or confected. The decay, both spiritual and physical, which encroaches first upon high-spirited, foolish, endearing Isabel, and later upon her husband, the upright and honest Lieutenant Wiley, is presented with a dramatic force unequalled since *Tender is the Night*. Certainly no narrative of comparable range and power has been published in this country since R. C. Hutchinson's *Shining Scabbard*.

J. M-R.

AT THE PLAY

Valmouth (LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH)
A Day in the Life of . . . (SAVOY)
Live Like Pigs (ROYAL COURT)

THE pleasure of Ronald Firbank is in the exotic atmosphere in which his satirized characters combine in an outrageous society. The trick was in its essence literary, and Sandy Wilson is a bold man to have tried to transfer it to the stage. His adaptation of *Valmouth* as a musical is imaginative, intelligent and faithful. It succeeds more than might have been expected, but it asks a lot of an audience ignorant of Firbank and presented with a group of characters heavily loaded with eccentricity. The first half opens slowly and obliquely with a largely female gallery of oddities, amusing in themselves but with no common link; if it could be cut and speeded up to match the greater gaiety that follows, the play would be much more coherent. In a way Mr. Wilson gets close to the original; but Firbank's wit repeated on the stage is apt to sound pretentious.

Mr. Wilson's music grows on one and some of his lyrics are excellent. Vida Hope's production does everything to help except in making the cast sing their words clearly. Tony Walton's decorations are lavish and charming. There is plenty of comic talent. Barbara Couper, wonderfully palsied, is a tremendous

REP SELECTION

Dundee Rep, *Juno and the Paycock*, until October 18th.
Connaught, Worthing, *Variation on a Theme*, until October 11th.
Marlowe, Canterbury, *Small Hotel*, until October 11th.
Castle, Farnham, *The Bride and the Bachelor*, until October 11th.

dowager, Doris Hare a delicious centenarian, while Geoffrey Dunn and Marcia Ashton shine in small parts. I grew a little tired of Fenella Fielding's long innings as a stylized nymphomaniac, but this was one of the points where Firbank doesn't come over. The central position, the eastern masseuse, is held very soundly by Bertice Reading. A curious evening, neither a failure nor a success.

Ambitiously, and on the whole with success, Jack Poplewell in *A Day in the Life of . . .* shows us how differently a man is viewed by the principal people in his life. His hero is a middle-aged publisher of popular songs, caught up in the rat-race of Tin Pan Alley, a sympathetic rogue who neglects his wife and solaces his unhappiness with girls and liquor. In a series of short scenes we are given conflicting facets of his character. To his current floozie he is an elderly bore with a useful wallet, to his secretary a dazzling superman, to his chief rival in business a dangerous crook, to his adoring mother a small boy with a halo,

to the barmaid in his local a tiresome soak, and to his wife a pathetic relic of early love.

The scenes vary in quality and tone; it is a weakness that farce, satiric comedy and straight sentiment are loosely bound, but at their best, as in the mother's drawing-room and a restaurant, they are very funny. In the main they are held together by two remarkable performances. Alfred Marks, supported by an armoury of wigs, plays the hero with untiring comic resource, and as the compère, a nice little city man who meets the audience as if by accident, Naughton Wayne displays his polished mastery of the absolutely natural. But most of the others are good too: Gabrielle Hamilton as the eager, spectacled secretary, timidly pursuing, Amy Dalby as the besotted mother, Pamela Lane as the wife, and Robert Desmond as a moronic spinner of best-selling songs. The last is a small gem. Charles Hickman's production is full of neat satiric touches.

No one in his right mind would go to *Live Like Pigs* for pleasure. It is not even to be recommended medicinally, as a doctor might urge a course of mud baths, for it makes no constructive point about the abysmal conditions of its characters. We simply wallow in the filth of a bunch of boozy, lecherous, dishonest tramps who have been forcibly moved from an allotment tramcar to a council house. They are *clochards* defiant, completely anti-social; their motto, improbably expressed by the rampaging tart who is the mainspring of the group, is "Freedom of choice, that is the glory."

Against all the odds she seduces the fairly respectable citizen next door. Her son, busily stealing his employer's tools, attempts to rape the neighbour's daughter. The daft old sailor who heads the ménage shirks work and grows beerily nostalgic over his prowess as a killer. His daughter's crazy lover, escaped from prison to knock out a policeman, roams the housing estate roaring in imitation of a despondent hyena. At the drop of a cosh these people from the lower depths make animal love or fight with knives and bottles. In the end their behaviour provokes a riot, and the son is almost torn to pieces by the neighbours.

The first thing to say about John Arden, whose second play this is, is that he can write. The second is that what he has written here should have been drastically cut by the producers George Devine and Anthony Page. And the third is to ask why he wrote it at all. Not, apparently, to point out that it is the slums, and not their products, that must finally be held responsible; and not, surely, out of sympathy with his characters who even on their own level double-cross each other. All one can sense behind the play is a vague feeling for anarchy. In spite of its incredibilities (where were the council officials, where

the other neighbours?) and the maddening sandwiching of its many scenes with dreadful doggerel ballads, *Live Like Pigs* is powerful. But so is any cartload of manure.

It is well acted. Wilfrid Lawson's old sailor, gently mad, is an alarming figure; Anna Manahan's Irish gipsy (who speaks far too well) has sharpened her claws in the jungle. And Alan Dobie, Robert Shaw and Madge Brindley stiffen the sty's aroma.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Long Day's Journey Into Night (Globe—17/9/58) Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical drama. *Five Finger Exercise* (Comedy—23/7/58) a good serious play by a clever new writer. *Irma la Douce* (Lyric—23/7/58) French underworld musical.

ERIC KEOWN

PUNCH IN THE THEATRE

An exhibition of theatrical drawings and caricatures from *Punch* over the last one hundred and seventeen years is now at the Civic Theatre, Chesterfield, and the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow. In London an exhibition of *Punch* theatre drawings is at the Saville Theatre.



Sailor Sawney—WILFRID LAWSON

[*Live Like Pigs*]

AT THE PICTURES

The Naked and the Dead
Passionate Summer

WHAT was the essential point of Norman Mailer's novel which has been adapted for the film *The Naked and the Dead* (Director: Raoul Walsh) I don't remember, though I remember well enough the popular impression that the point of it was the printing of bad language. The film, however, amounts to an inflated story of the adventure of a single patrol sent to reconnoitre after the invasion of a Japanese-held Pacific island. The pattern is this: to contrive in the first part of the picture incidents—and flashbacks—that will fix in our minds the individuality, or more usually the type, of a number of different men, and then to get them all into the platoon that is sent on the dangerous mission.

An attempt is made, by way of an argument between a lieutenant (Cliff Robertson) and a cold-hearted general (Raymond Massey), to suggest that the whole thing is designed to prove a point about military discipline, but this hardly comes off. The general bases his life on the idea that the way to run an army and win wars is to make the men dislike

and, above all, *fear* the officers. At the end, the lieutenant brings out as his trump card the fact that when he was wounded three of his men thought well enough of him to carry him back eighteen miles through the jungle; and the general listens glumly, but without a word. I think on previous form he would have maintained that, though very gratifying for the lieutenant, this episode still proves nothing about the way to win a war.

The action stuff is very well done; this is the heart of the film, and the rest is unsatisfactory compared with it. There are the usual army incidents and characters, including the brutal sadistic sergeant (Aldo Ray) for whom killing is a pleasure, but although interesting and in their way effective enough they are essentially the sort of thing we have seen before in war films. So, for that matter, is the adventure of the patrol; but the mountain and jungle scene and the circumstantial detail freshen it, and there are passages of great excitement and suspense. My dissatisfaction with the picture as a whole is traceable to the fact that, while pretending to depth and significance, it is really no more than a superficial action story.

The radical trouble with *Passionate Summer* (Director: Rudolph Cartier) is that almost all the narrative, as distinct from what could be described as decorative detail, is told in dialogue; and this makes all the worse the fact that the dialogue rhythm has a noticeable monotony. Each pair of utterances, remark and comment or question and answer,

has the air of a single item, separated by a pause and an appropriate facial expression from the next; and more often than not one of these pairs consists of a fairly short expository sentence on one side and a flat word or two, the equivalent of "message received," on the other. I was irritated too by the perfunctory ending, which—whether it is in the original book by Richard Mason or not—gives the far too familiar impression of having been slapped on to send the customers away happy.

The scene is Kingston, Jamaica—beautiful Eastman Colour photography by Ernest Steward—where the central character (Bill Travers) teaches in a co-educational school, and the title puts it mildly; this summer is passionate indeed. A lovely air-hostess (Virginia McKenna) is rescued from a plane wreck, and he develops a passion for her; meanwhile not only the headmaster's wife (Yvonne Mitchell) but also a thirteen-year-old girl pupil, to say nothing of the air-hostess, reveal their passion for him. He loves the girl, the jealous wife tries to frustrate their affair and seduces him when the silly girl is tempted back to her former lover, the child dies after seeing the seduction and he fears she may have killed herself, then the girl comes back—and nearly all the point of this is conveyed in words, though there are innumerable variations of scene—and weather—for the circumstances in which they are spoken. Miss Mitchell, and Ellen Barrie as the thirteen-year-old, come out of it best, because they have most to work with in the way of character: the wife is a pitiable

neurotic, and the child is a little American terror with charm.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

No Central London run is being given to *The Man Upstairs*, which is at the New Victoria for this week and then goes straight out on release: catch it if you can—a really excellent small-scale British picture, thoroughly enjoyable. More about it next week. About the most worth-while picture in London is *The Defiant Ones* (1/10/58). The Russian *The Cranes are Flying* (24/9/58), uneven but remarkably interesting, continues. More conventional fare, but well done: *The Proud Rebel* (1/10/58).

One outstandingly good release: *Ice Cold in Alex* (9/7/58). *The Bravados* (3/9/58) is a Western well done but with an unattractive theme (revenge) and an out-of-key ending.

RICHARD MALLETT

AT THE BALLET

Le Mal du Siècle
Diagramme
(COLISEUM)

THE abounding vitality which is one of the exciting characteristics of the Marquis de Cuevas's company took a new turn with the introduction to London of *Le Mal du Siècle*, a ballet aiming at expressing "the importance which jazz occupies with the present generation," and offered as "a souvenir for a future generation." Oddly enough, it is neither of the present nor of the future of which the new piece seems to speak, so much as of the past.

Alex North's music is, indeed, recognizably in the modern idiom, but James Starbuck's choreography is happily nostalgic. It has not broken with pre-war ragtime and, what is more, it relies with unmistakably good effect on classical foundations for its elegance and line. "This," says the programme, "is the 'beat' generation." In jazz jargon, it should be explained to the unenlightened, "beat" does not mean beaten; but merely that one "digs." And to dig is to understand.

I am bound to say I did not detect much digging in this high-spirited piece of gay abstraction. All was most entertainingly clear and the only regret was that one could not join the rollicking party. The whole highly polished performance had at its peak the superb accomplishment of Rosella Hightower and Nicholas Polajenko. The setting—largely a matter of clever and imaginative lighting—and the amusing dresses showed a pleasant talent in Alwyne Camble who devised them.

Diagramme raises again the old problem of the fair treatment of defenceless composers. The choreographer who can add anything to our understanding or



Sergeant Croft—ALDO RAY

[The Naked and the Dead

enjoyment of Bach's genius is yet to be born. Jainine Charrat is a highly gifted and inventive artist and in this *pas de cinq* which is continuously delightful she gives the dancers grand opportunity of showing their quality. But poor Bach, indifferently played, remains an embarrassing and unwilling collaborator. In the sole female role Genia Melikova was superbly at her ease with the four men, Wasil Tupin, Georges Goviloff, Michel Nunes and Philip Salem who, tossing her from one to another as though she were a feather, contributed without apparent effort to a minor triumph of virtuosity.

C. B. MORTLOCK

ON THE AIR

"Wagons, Ho!"

AS the old familiar music and the old familiar wagon wheel and Ward Bond's old familiar face pole-axed us into the old familiar coma, an American lady who "teaches school" at Bushy Park rallied long enough to say "All my children will be whipped tomorrow, because they all stay up looking at this to-night." (Whipped=tired.) "Wagon Train" stays top of the pops in ITV features on every channel. Did I hear Major Adams say recently that they'd been on the trail for fifty-seven days already? Or was it weeks? I forget. But I can't imagine we shall ever see him with all his men, staring at the Pacific. They are suspended in time.

Over the hill there are Indians, or buffalo, or grazing pastures, or outlaws, or a gang of Scots in kilts. "Wagons, ho!" shouts Major Adams in the mornings, and "Wagons, halt!" in the evenings. The good men string hammocks and brew coffee and play cards in the firelight. The bad men skulk and steal rifles. The good women sew shirts and tend the sick ("Just let him rest. It's the best medicine I know of"). The bad women make eyes at Flint McCullers, and young romantics bellow their love on late-night strolls between the silent wagons. Linda Darnell within living memory took a bath in a barrel, soaping her pretty shoulders while gay gambler Cesar Romero stepped out from behind a bush and said "Howdy!" (Where in the prairies did she get the water to fill the barrel, and how did she get into the barrel for her bath before Cesar Romero appeared and out of it when he'd gone? There are never any steps set against bathing barrels in Westerns.)

Indians are good and bad. When clashes occur between mounted gangs no horse falls. A lot of men do, but horses only stand on their hind legs and tip their riders off. Nothing kills so suddenly as an arrow in the stomach, except an arrow in the back, which can kill a man sitting, so that he seems to be alive till the others notice he doesn't play his cards in turn. Then they touch him

and he slumps forward on to the packing-case card-table with the arrow uppermost. It is too late even for "Doc" to help.

These last two weeks there has been a lot of "colour" consciousness in TV serials. "Starr and Company" (BBC), under-rehearsed, showed us that negroes could be good chaps too. In "The Untouchable" (BBC), a weak and ragged playlet, Flora Robson, impoverished relict of an Indian Army colonel, was saved from "withdrawal" by the cheerful Indian (from India) lodger in the digs she kept in S.W.5. And in "Wagon Train" a Boston-bred foundling got captured by cruel Crow Indians, and the chief gave him to his mother as a slave. The slave fell in love with the chief's pretty sister, who, wide-eyed among the guy-ropes, said to him "Boston, it is the camp of your tribe?" Then at Christmas time he tried to explain the Christmas story to her, and when the weather got warm, he found her bathing in a stream (in a very decent black shift), and she asked him to tell her what the marriage customs were in his Boston tribe. He was trying to explain about kisses, when her brother and mother—well, anyway they got married and she died in childbirth, and he was tremendously pro-exogamy, pro-Crow and pro-Major Seth Adams, and the coffee over the camp fire.

Oh yes, his "mother," who had gone, Indian fashion, over the hill to die alone, was nursed back to health by Doc in a single night, while the Bostonian told Major Adams and Flint McCullers his whole story in flashbacks. He didn't go back to his Boston law-firm. He rode off with his resuscitated mother to rejoice

the Crows and to be a worthy leader to them.

I know that Indian blood isn't "colour" in America, but I wonder if this particular episode, perhaps listed in the store-room as "Boston Brave," was pushed in for English consumption during the period when Nottingham and Notting Hill had bruised our consciences. If TV makes us think, at the frontier 'twixt sleep and awake, it may catch us subliminally, and all the more effectively.

"Gun Law" (ITV, Tuesdays) is almost as easy, cliché for cliché, as "Wagon Train." Matt Dillon, Marshal of Dodge City ("Gun Law"), may well use the same office as Wyatt Earp ("Wyatt Earp," ITV, Sundays). It's a step up from the sunlit street, where the town layabouts lay about and whittle sticks. In the Marshal's office the rifles stand in the rack and, as the Marshal and his men never lock the door when they slouch out, the rifles must be an easy haul for the bad men. There's a three-cell jail out at the back, and the swing-door saloon is just down the sidewalk. It's becoming rather a problem to keep Dillon and Earp as truly romantic figures without lugging in a girl or two to flutter their hearts from time to time. Wyatt Earp last week was soft enough to go on a picnic with a pretty young sempstress widow who'd sewn on a coat-button for him. And, when she had packed all the used picnic things back in the basket, and you feared that Earp was going to offer her marriage, she drew a gun on him. You see, many episodes earlier, Earp had put her father into prison. These revenges are good stock plot material.

Although Dr. Bronowski proved to me the Tuesday before last ("New Horizons," ITV, Tuesdays) that my mind has been rotting away for the last thirty years (since I was at my intellectual peak at eighteen), I am continuously astonished at the number of serial stories, and groups of characters therein, on radio and TV and in strip cartoons, that I can carry vividly in my head simultaneously. Yet when, as I emerged from a theatre in Soho the other night, my car had disappeared I couldn't remember its number. I gave the police the number of one I had had in 1954, and they, searching through the list of the cars they had towed away that evening, said sorry, mine must have been stolen. In fact it was safely in the yard of the police station in Kentish Town, whither the cops had towed it, dammit and bless them. But it shows you what can happen to a man whose mind is full of TV, radio and strip serials. He knows the geography of the Marshal's office in Dodge City, of the Bumstead's house in the *Daily Sketch*, and of Jane in the *Daily Mirror*. But he can't remember his own car number. Over to you, Dr. Bronowski! RICHARD USBORNE



WARD BOND

(Wagon Train)

In the City



Sir Halford Reddish

Building for the Future

ONE of the victims of the credit squeeze was the building industry—and it is almost adding insult to injury to say that it was an intended victim. A 7 per cent Bank Rate is quite a deterrent to the private house builder. The tender mercies of the open capital market have been anything but tender to the local authorities bent on maintaining their housebuilding schedules. Industrial building, too, has taken a toss.

The result has been less demand for building materials of all kinds. Bricks, for example, of which 594 million were being produced each month in 1956, had dropped to a monthly average of 576 million in 1957 and to only 540 million over the first seven months of this year. The same trend has been apparent in cement where the production figures have dropped from 1,064,000 tons a month in 1956 to 997,000 tons in 1957 and around 930,000 tons this year.

Now, however, the turn is coming. The squeeze is off, we can expect building to pick up and the demand for building materials to increase. Apart from this pick-up in building there is likely to be much greater demand for cement now that the road programme is really getting under way and the new by-passes with their elegant fly-overs and clover leaves are beginning to thrust their way across agricultural land.

Now, when the building industry is still under the shadow of the recent recession, is the time to look around and pick the companies that are likely to do best out of the recovery and whose shares have not yet felt the full impact of this improved prospect.

Among these is the Rugby Portland Cement Co., whose Chairman, Sir Halford Reddish, was complaining in his last annual report to shareholders that none of the Company's British works was producing to capacity and that since these plants were made for continuous process the drop in production must have an adverse effect on costs. Within weeks of that rather

gloomy statement being prepared, and in fact on the very day on which it was circulated to the shareholders, Sir Halford was able to say that most of the company's plants had reverted to full production. Seldom can Sir Halford have found his words so pleasant to eat.

A remarkable man is Sir Halford: an accountant by training but with none of the negative defensive traits that all too often mark that profession. In his own business he is a dynamo and in his spare time a fervent defender of capitalism and private enterprise. He once astounded a bunch of coal miners whom he was lecturing by addressing them as "fellow-shareholders." He had learned that one of the National Mineworkers Union provident funds had wisely invested a substantial part of its resources in Ordinary shares. He then proceeded to educate his audience in their rights, and in such mysteries as those of market and nominal values, telling them that a share "bonus" was no bonus at all since it merely increased the number of pieces of paper ranking for earnings, which themselves would

be entirely unaffected by the creation of additional shares.

He dealt with the argument occasionally heard that if dividends were eliminated prices could be reduced, and told his miner friends that superficially this was true and that if Rugby Cement paid no dividend at all they might reduce the price of cement by 1½d. a bag. But why he added, should anyone then find capital on which he obtained no return. In the longer run it would be a case of "No capital, no job, no cement."

In the issue of September 24, for John Brown and Co., as the builders of a natural gas pipeline in Austria, read "Constructors—John Brown Ltd." They are part of the same family. John Brown and Company, Limited, is the parent and its main offspring builds some of the best ships in the world. "Constructors—John Brown Ltd." are a wholly owned subsidiary of John Brown and Company, Limited, and the evidence suggests that their laying of pipelines is pretty good too.

LOMBARD LANE

* * *

In the Country



Sweet and Strong

OCTOBER can be the stickiest month. The other day a neighbour of mine in North Devon decided to demolish a derelict cottage. It had stood roofless and windowless on his farm for the last thirty years, during which time its only tenants had been a few broody hens on the ground floor, with an owl or two upstairs. As he planned to build a new wing on to his farmhouse he wanted some coin stones. And of course the old cottage was a mine of right-angled stones already faced for his mason. Now that concrete blocks are 1s. 6d. each he reckoned that the cottage would pay for knocking over, especially as it was so dilapidated that it looked as though it only needed a push.

True it didn't take his men long to sling off the remains of the roof timbers, fork down chunks of sodden thatch, and hurl a couple of doors down into the garden. And the front and back walls came away with one pull of the tractor

when a chain was hitched round the living-room windows. This left the end wall and its chimney stack standing unattached. Without the support from the side walls it appeared that one tug from the tractor would bring the whole chimney stack toppling. The chain was attached, the tractor driver let out the clutch. The next thing we knew was that all of us were drenched in honey and besieged by bees. The whole of the end wall was one piece of comb. Honey not mortar had kept the walls standing. There must have been nearly half a ton there. At any rate it would take quite a few bears a few weeks to lick us clean.

A similar sticky example of cornucopia occurred in a lane here recently, when an old elm fell across the bank. Enough wild honey spilled down the road to stop a motor-car.

This flood of wild honey makes me wonder once again where I could find some Californian bees. I used to have a jar of them when I was a child. They look exactly like lumps of tapioca. The jar was filled with water; the bees rose and fell continuously, turning it into a sweet wine. All you had to do was to change the water once a week, add a little sugar and bottle the resulting wine. I understand that these bees are in fact a form of yeast, activated by light and glucose. I would like to have some of those bees again, now that my head for alcohol has improved since the nursery.

RONALD DUNCAN



The author continues his impartial report on the United States, written, unlike many books by those who have spent a few weeks in the country, from the vantage point of not having been there at all.

2

I REACH THE MAINLAND

IT is surprising how quickly one can get used to having mayonnaise poured over one's bacon and egg. I had been in the United States no more than two weeks (or a fortnight, as we say in England) when I found myself wolfing down this exotic dish like a native. The absence of a knife tended to slow me up at first, but no eyebrows were raised when I took to scooping up the heavy juice with my tea-spoon. I am confident that if ever I get to San Francisco I'll be able to tackle my porridge with chop-sticks as to the manner born.

I cannot deny that I find *all* American food exciting. By the time I reached Rhode Island (the smallest state in the Union, famous for red hens and the Woonsocket worsted plants) I had tried tinned apricots in mutton stew, tomato sauce on trifle (with pistachio nuts), strawberry jam with a double-decker sandwich of home-cured pork and crayfish, and lamb chops swimming in chocolate sauce. The great thing about Americans, leaving aside their plumbing for the moment, is that they are not afraid of their food. They are also, of

course, justly proud of their seltzer industry.

Curiously enough, I never caught the habit of dipping my cake in my coffee and sucking lumps off it. My American friends put this down to the quaint English passion for drawing the line, and I suppose they were right. There are, after all, limits.

New England is up in the top right-hand corner—about as far away from wicked Las Vegas as it can get without actually putting out to sea. It is very old and slightly more historic than Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. I was constantly being shown bits of the *Mayflower*, scenes of bloody massacres by the British, genuine pilgrims' hats marked *Kiss Me Baby*, or the graves of people like Hawthorne, Tom Thumb, Samuel Adams and Louisa May Alcott. In Boston, Mass., which is a place of interest in New England (others being Wiscasset, Skowhegan and the Jethro Coffin House in Nantucket, admission 30c.), I saw the place where Emerson grazed his mother's cow. It seemed an ideal spot. Here too I saw where Paul Revere, a rider, finally crushed the armed might of Britain with a lantern and some Minute Men; and outside the Boston Athenæum (closed Sat.) an old gentleman with bean-stains on his necktie told me that the planet Jupiter rises five minutes earlier in Boston than it does in Washington. I congratulated him warmly, and made a mental note to see what the position is in Texas. The conversation then taking a more personal turn, he revealed that he suffered off and

on from attacks of split personality, owing to the fact that while his grandmother was born in County Mayo like everybody else, he was saddled with three earlier ancestors who were first, second and third ashore respectively at Plymouth on December 16th, 1620. When I suggested that this made the shape of his family tree seem wildly improbable, he drew himself up to his full height and said that still another of his relations had put his name to Magna Carta. Not only that, but he had trained men hard at work that very moment in London, England, trying to count up how many Angles, Saxons, and Jutes there were on his mother's side. "And this," he said, showing me his waistcoat, "is the family tartan."

Since it is nice and handy, and more historic than Yale, all the young men of Boston go to Harvard, where many of the books they are encouraged to read would stand a fair chance of being publicly burned back in their old home town. To counterbalance this, and possibly as a precaution, co-eds are not allowed. Longfellow was a professor at Harvard, and one likes to think that T. S. Eliot first came under his influence when he studied there. One also likes to think of T. S. Eliot roaring around the campus in a Model T Ford, with a capital H on his sweat-shirt, singing "Ain't She Sweet." The Harvard boys make a gay picture as they roam the autumn woods waving football pennants, quoting bits of *Walden*, and blushing at the young ladies from Radcliffe College. (New England is divided, by the way,



into the Autumn Tints Zone and the Breughel Territory. There are two separate sets of weather conditions, which remain constant: nobody, for example, ever saw Vermont under less than three feet of snow, with honest puritan Yankees plodding grimly to church in all directions; while Massachusetts woods somehow contrive to grow in a perpetual blaze of fall splendour.)

Maine is bigger than any other New England state, and has more sardines. Its inhabitants also vote two months earlier than anybody else in the Union—not because they are impatient but because the whole world knows they're going to vote Republican anyway, so they figure they might as well get it over with and go on planting potatoes. I took the opportunity of penetrating to

the northern border of Maine, accompanied by a man in a fur hat and snowshoes who happened to be going that way, and before I knew where I was we were in Canada.

I FOUND the Canadians very friendly, all three of them. They spoke fluent French with a Scottish accent, and had Union Jacks in cupboards at home, but apart from that they were indistinguishable from other Americans. There were superficial differences, of course, but I was assured that these are being ironed out all the time. I believe it's the same in Australia. Presently, steering the conversation away from mink-trapping and the putting of middle-cut salmon into cans, I inquired about the progress of the arts in Canada, and was delighted

to learn that they now have two or three theatres. "I don't—how you say?—go much for it myself," my informant told me, "but, hoots, I guess it's something for the women-folk, yes?"

New Hampshire is different. The Algonquins ran it at one time, and seem to have been happy enough, while in the town of Newport *Mary Had a Little Lamb* was written. In Franklin I was able to see the homestead of Daniel Webster for a quarter. I had a long chat about the great man with my guide, and it wasn't until a week later (or a sennight, as we say) that I realized I had been talking about Daniel Boone all the time.

"So then," said my guide, "Dan'l he ups and tells Senator Hayne, 'Liberty and Union,' he says, 'now and forever, one and inseparable.'"

"Ah, yes," I said. "That would be just before he was captured by the Shawnee Indians."

I wasn't *too* embarrassed about this, because the ignorance of some Americans about *our* country is quite staggering. I was actually to meet a woman, in Detroit of all places, who didn't know that a Number 13 bus goes to Swiss Cottage.

NEW Hampshire is a busy little state. Wherever I went they seemed to be up to something—making wood pulp, quarrying granite, catching lobsters, digging up gneiss, or manufacturing cotton goods. There are still quiet parts, of course, where the true New England atmosphere prevails. In such places one is often reminded of home—thatched cottages, housing estates, soft-drink ads, leafy lanes and bubble-gum machines: but there the resemblance ends, for the people seem quite foreign. They are starchy, unbending, secretive, dark-clad and religious. How I missed the familiar sound of laughing British crowds!—the smiling faces on every hand, the open-hearted chatter on the Underground, the readiness to exchange confidences with total strangers, the brilliant flashes of colour from the women's beige overcoats, the light-hearted bowlers of the men! Here I found only silent groups all dressed in grey and black, who stood in the streets and stared at me suspiciously, holding pitchforks and Nonconformist hymn-books. When I asked the way in a place in Vermont the village green emptied in an instant, except for an old woman with a besom who went on oiling the stocks. Shutters banged across all the windows, and I was aware of beady eyes watching me through chinks. These, I reflected, were the people who declared war on Nazi Germany before the United States got around to it, and I didn't find it hard to believe.

They are famous in Vermont for milk and marble, and on the side they make very sinister things indeed, like portable ovens and electronic organs. When they have a parade the drum-majorettes wear hobble skirts. They use only one word at a time, like Gary Cooper, and it usually means No. If it doesn't mean No it means Why. The women part their hair in the middle, and the men wear collars only on a Sunday. When I asked them what they thought of

Britain they narrowed their eyes and began collecting jagged stones. Appropriately enough it was Emerson who said that there should always be a minority unconvinced. It lives in Vermont.

The world's biggest watch factory is in New England somewhere, but I never got around to it, what with fishing for square-tail and horned pout, shooting duck, picking cranberries, grappling with swordfish, playing possum, skiing, and trying to find Thoreau's hut. What an exciting part of the world this is! They make submarines in Connecticut, and produce more scallops and abrasive garnets in Massachusetts than anywhere else in



the world. In Massachusetts, too, the inventor of the spring bed was actually born. And yet, apart from all this feverish activity, there are places like Narragansett, Rhode Island, where rich New Yorkers loll and browse in their palatial summer residences, planning their winter sales campaigns; artists' colonies on the coast of Maine where fat old ladies in floppy hats and striped shorts paint yachts and argue about Grandma Moses and Modigliani; authors' colonies where young men barely out of their first convertibles lie about in the sun threatening to write longer books than James Gould Cozzens; sculptors' colonies, madrigal colonies, fretwork colonies, and a colony devoted to a systematic study of the printer's errors in *Finnegans Wake*. New England is in fact a cradle of the arts.

In 1701 Yale was started in New Haven, Conn., because Harvard found they had no one to play football with. Since then Yale has never looked back, and now has a Glee Club and a brontosaurus skeleton seventy feet long. When I had seen this I went to Pennsylvania.

I visited Niagara Falls on the way. This involved a detour, but it was worth it: never in my life have I seen a larger source of power for electro-metallurgy. As a spectacle it is rather noisy by comparison with Stonehenge, but the honeymoon facilities are far more elaborate. For 90c. including waterproof

clothing you can sail to the foot of the thing and frighten yourself to death. "They ain't got nothing like this in Limehouse, Mac!" the guide yelled proudly. "I only have your word for that!" I shouted back. Next day, having ascertained that there were no arrangements for anyone to cycle across on a tightrope, I left for Philadelphia, Penn.

Pennsylvania turned out to be almost as historic as New England. (I have reached the conclusion that if Americans have something that isn't taller than anything else it had better be older or they'll tear it down and sell it.) I saw the Liberty Bell (free), Edgar Allan Poe's house (50c.) and the chair where people sat to sign the Declaration of Independence. All this was in Pennsylvania, but in Pittsburgh they seem to go in for making steel. Pennsylvania is a mixed-up state altogether. For instance, one day you might run into a crowd of Amish people walking about without any buttons, and the next day you might find yourself in a country-club district, where everybody knows everybody else and can't understand how in the world they can afford to keep two convertibles and a British car. These are mostly commuters, of the same type as those to be found in parts of N.Y. One night they have a party of their own, and the next night they go to a party up the street, and so on. In this way they manage to see the same people every

night, but against a different décor. It makes them feel that they belong. A party is a good deal of gin, less vermouth, and a lot of kidding about infidelity. Occasionally there is a divorce, or a suicide, and so far *Reader's Digest* hasn't been able to find a solution to it all. They are inclined to blame the *New Yorker*, but they think it will work out all right in the end.

I have, like Stephen Vincent Benét before me, fallen in love with American names. On the night before I left Pa. and struck out boldly into the interior I lay tossing and turning in my brownstone motel on the border of W. Va., listening to the kidnappers crunching up in their stolen convertibles to change number-plates and hear the latest radio reports of their progress. And all night long the wild, romantic place-names clanked majestically through my head, beckoning, tempting, irresistible . . .

Clinton, Clanton, Claxton, Scranton, Hamtramck, Hackensack, Harrogate, Cocoa;

Dickeyville, Bradford, Soap Lake, Nitro Mechanicsville, Murphy, Marblehead, Henderson . . .

I have also made a note to visit What Cheer, Iowa.

Next week:

Splendid Isolation



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